

Effectiveness of Student Responses to Teacher Written Feedback: A Study of Thai Graduate Students

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This study investigates how graduate students respond to various types of teacher written feedback including surface-level, clarification-level, and content-level feedback. Data were obtained from 180 students' expository compositions, which were analyzed in terms of categories of feedback delivered to them and the ways they were revised in response to the teacher's comments provided. The results revealed that most of the students completely responded to the teacher commentary and revised their initial drafts effectively. However, some of the student revisions were partially complete, or in a few cases there were no revisions in response to the comments, suggesting that the students did not understand the feedback the teacher provided or that the teacher's comments were not clear and effective enough.

Keywords: Teacher written feedback, process-oriented writing, second language writing

การตอบสนองของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อการให้ผลสะท้อนของครูในงานเขียนของนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษา

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาการตอบสนองของนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาที่มีต่อการให้ผลสะท้อนของครูผู้สอนในงานเขียนของนักศึกษา ซึ่งประกอบด้วยการให้ผลสะท้อนระดับพื้นผิว ระดับที่ต้องให้คำอธิบายเพิ่มเติม และระดับที่ต้องปรับปรุงเนื้อหาใจความ ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยมาจากงานเขียนนักศึกษา 180 ชิ้น ซึ่งได้รับการวิเคราะห์ประเภทของผลสะท้อนที่ครูให้และการตอบสนองที่นักศึกษามีต่อผลสะท้อนที่ได้รับ ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ตอบสนองต่อผลสะท้อนได้ครบถ้วนสมบูรณ์ อย่างไรก็ตาม การปรับแก้บางครั้งที่ถือว่าไม่สมบูรณ์ หรือไม่มีการปรับแก้ตามผลสะท้อนของครู ซึ่งชี้ให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาอาจจะไม่เข้าใจผลสะท้อนที่ครูให้ หรือผลสะท้อนอาจจะไม่ชัดเจนและไม่เหมาะสม

คำสำคัญ: การให้ผลสะท้อนของครูผู้สอน การเขียนที่เน้นกระบวนการการเขียน การเขียนในภาษาที่สอง

Introduction

Feedback plays a crucial role in developing students' writing skills in the process-oriented approach. In an EFL writing course, feedback can help students improve their content, organization, and grammar. Students, regardless of age or educational level, tend to rely on feedback to improve their writing during a revision process. There are a large number of studies conducted with regard to whether and how feedback helps improve second language writing (e.g. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Carroll, Swain,

& Roberge, 1992; Ellis, 1994; Gass, 1997; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1996). In addition, the effects of feedback on the improvement of writing skills, both at the sentence level and at the discourse level, have been studied even though the results of these studies are still inconclusive and sometimes contradictory (e.g. Ferris, 1997; Frantzen, 1995; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992).

Among the various types of feedback on writing, EFL students have shown their preference for teacher written feedback over the other types of feedback including peer feedback and oral feedback in conferences (Leki, 1991; Zhang, 1995). Although its contribution to students' writing development is still doubtful (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), writing teachers often feel that it is necessary to respond to student errors, especially grammatical ones. This type of feedback is usually welcome by many ESL students, particularly those from cultures where highly directive teachers are valued. Concerning its benefit for students' writing skill development, Ferris (2002) suggests that teacher feedback customized to students' knowledge and experience is a helpful technique for students so that they may avoid future problems and errors in writing. Reid (1993) suggests that feedback needs to be provided in enough detail so that students can act and commit to change in their writing. Sommers (1982) advocates feedback delivery stressing that comments create the motive for revising; without them, student writers will revise in a "consistently narrow and predictable way" and assume that their writing communicates successfully (149). Leki (1991) maintains that teacher feedback is very important as students usually want errors in their writing to be corrected, and they will feel frustrated if no teacher feedback is provided for their writing. Teacher feedback apparently plays a significant role in developing student writing although it may not be responsible for long-term language improvement.

In addition, no matter how important or useful teacher feedback is on student writing, it is still not clear how effectively students can respond to the feedback. There are sometimes mismatches between the teacher's expectations about how students should rewrite their compositions and the actual revision students perform in response to teacher feedback.

Review of the literature

Providing teacher written feedback to student writing

Because writing is considered as a complex developmental task and a recursive process, the process approach focuses more on how a text is crafted through the discovery of meaning than on the

production of error-free sentences or paragraphs. In this approach, written feedback is given to both content and form during all phases of writing, i.e. from the initial stage during which ideas are generated to the final stage where the entire discourse is revised. With this method, texts were improved considerably both in grammar and in content (Fathman & Whalley, 1990).

Teachers can find it less tiring to use online functions for giving feedback to student writing. With a number of software programs available, teachers can spend less time grading essays. On the students' part, they would find feedback from their teachers less intimidating and, on the contrary, more encouraging with electronic responses that they are more familiar with. Nevertheless, teachers who are unfamiliar with or unskillful in utilizing computers as instructional media would find this method threatening and unreliable particularly when having to handle a large number of writing papers.

In the process approach, where students are required to produce multiple drafts, appropriate comments should be provided during the various stages of writing. Teacher response to a first draft will be to provide helpful comments on its progress and suggestions as to how it can be improved in subsequent drafts. For a final draft, comments regarding "what we liked, how we felt about the text, and what they might do next time if the students are going to write something different" should be provided (Harmer, 2001: 111). Ferris (2003) suggests that feedback be delivered at intermediate stages of the writing process because students can improve their writing in subsequent revisions based on the teacher feedback.

Form-focused feedback in L2 writing

Providing form-focused feedback to L2 writing (either direct or indirect) is a crucial issue regarding the improvement of student writing. This type of feedback, when delivered at the sentence level, can be considered a form of meaningful input that helps learners understand better about L2 and deal with their own language problems (e.g., Bates et al., 1993; Boshier, 1990; Graham, 1987). Because students usually cannot identify their own errors both in form and meaning, feedback on form, even negative feedback, may be necessary (Boshier, 1990; Graham, 1987). With teacher feedback, explanations about their errors, or both, the number of errors that the ESL students made decreased (Leki, 1992).

Explicitness of teacher written feedback

Feedback may be direct with explicit corrections or indirect with advice or suggestions (Ferris, 2002). These two types of feedback differ mainly in the degree of explicitness of error correction. While the effects of explicit error correction may be doubtful, implicit feedback (e.g., giving codes, giving symbols, providing marginal feedback or locating errors) can be employed as an alternative (Semke, 1984). Indirect feedback seems to be more useful as it involves students' responsibility for their own learning and more effective in improving their own proficiency than explicit or direct feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998).

Research on teacher feedback

Teacher feedback may take one of the two major forms: teacher-student conferences and teacher written feedback. While the former is less popular due to the time constraints and the large number of students in writing classes, the latter is far more common as a means of responding to student writing. Only teacher written feedback will be reviewed and discussed in this section as this type of feedback is the main focus of this study.

Early studies have revealed some negative effects of L2 teacher written feedback. For instance, Zamel (1985), in her analysis of L2 teachers' written comments on students' essays, found that the teachers misinterpreted the students' texts and gave comments in such a way that their subsequent revised versions became less coherent. In addition, many of the teachers' comments were vague and confusing. Cohen (1987), in his investigation of the students' perceptions of teacher feedback in relation to their subsequent actions, found that some of the students ignored the teachers' comments and that the students had a limited repertoire of strategies to respond to the teachers' comments.

Another factor that possibly leads to the failure of the teachers' feedback is the mismatch between students' and teachers' preferences for comments. Cohen (1987) and Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) reported that the students wished for more feedback on content than on grammar. Leki (1991) found that the students strongly wished all their grammatical errors to be marked and corrected by their teachers even though they showed a growing interest in content and organization. This revealed that these EFL students had a mistaken notion of equating revisions with correcting surface errors and the unrealistic expectation for perfect grammar might lead to a lack of improvement in students' revisions.

Nevertheless, some studies showed that teacher feedback had a positive effect on students' writing proficiency and resulted in improvement in student writing. EFL students valued teacher feedback and expected to receive feedback from their teachers (Leki, 1990; Zhang, 1995). Students also found teacher feedback useful for their revision, and they tended to carefully read their essays and respond to teacher comments on the initial drafts rather than on the final drafts (Ferris, 1995). Teacher feedback based on four major criteria: length, type, use of hedges, and text-specificity was also found to have positive effects on student writing (Ferris, 1997). These teacher comments included limited grammar feedback, marginal comments which functioned as requests for information or for revision, and focused text-specific comments that provided clear directions for the revision tasks. In addition, other feedback techniques that were claimed to be effective include an approach in which teachers had to provide feedback only on certain aspects of content and form without giving comments on all written errors or problems (Leki, 1992) and a study in which students were asked to produce written dialogues in response to the teachers' comments (Jenkins, 1987).

A comparative study between peer and teacher feedback in English writing classes revealed that learners passively accepted and used more teacher feedback than peer feedback but did not necessarily understand its value or significance (Lee, 2008; Zhao, 2010). With regard to students with learning challenges, a study revealed that teacher written feedback positively affected student performance and did not harm students' self-esteem (Siewert, 2011).

Revision in the process-oriented writing approach

In the process-oriented approach, writing is seen as a recursive process which consists of prewriting, writing, and revision. Of all these stages, revision can be regarded as the major and most important stage of process writing as it is usually through the revising process that student writing can be improved with the help of various types of feedback. Revision may take place at any point during the composing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981), where writers generate, reformulate, and refine ideas in an attempt to discover and approximate intended meanings (Zamel, 1982, 1983). During the revising stage, writers make both local and global alterations to their texts. These alterations involve both meaning and content modifications, and grammatical and lexical corrections. Revision can also be used as an assessment of the writing skills, and the ability to provide written feedback to assess students' proficiency contributes to the development of student writing. Revision was utilized as a type

of formative writing assessment to promote pedagogical practices and maximize student learning (Lee, 2011).

Teaching EFL writing in Thailand

Even though the process-oriented approach to writing is theoretically popular, its applications in the L2 context are not common and widespread. In Thailand, for instance, many writing classes at the undergraduate and the graduate levels still rely on the traditional approach to teaching writing, which is product-oriented and is mainly concerned with form. Only one draft is usually required for grading without any rewriting. Students' first drafts are essentially equivalent to their final drafts, and teachers mainly provide comments on surface features rather than on the content or meaning.

This study contributes to existing research on teacher feedback by investigating how EFL students revise their writing in response to the teacher's written comments on both the content level and the surface level. In particular, it presents the actual revisions the students performed in response to teacher written feedback on their initial drafts of expository compositions. The feedback was delivered in the form of comments to improve content, and the organization and coherence of the students' compositions, as well as correct the surface-level errors in their writing. Analysis of student revisions in this study revealed the manners in which the students revised their drafts. The results of this study mainly respond to the research question: How effectively do the students respond to teacher written feedback and revise their initial drafts?

Methodology

Participants

The study was conducted with 60 first-year graduate students pursuing a Master's Degree in *English for Careers* at a university in Thailand. All of them were Thai students enrolled in a required writing course, and their age range was from twenty-three to fifty. They earned previous degrees in various fields of study, and none of the participants had an overseas education as undergraduates even though some of them had been working for international organizations.

Procedures and data collection

In this study, the teacher/researcher provided comments on the students' 180 expository essays regarding content, organization, word choice, and grammar. The modes of the expository essays were

cause-and-effect, *comparison/contrast* and *classification*. The students were required to send their first drafts to the teacher through e-mail. Subsequently, the teacher gave comments on the drafts and returned them through e-mail to the owners of the essays for revision. The students sent their rewritten drafts, which were revised in response to the teacher feedback. In this study, the students were asked to make only one revision of their initial drafts.

Data analysis

Analysis of teacher written feedback

The data consisted primarily of the students' initial drafts that had received teacher written feedback. The teacher written comments in each composition were analyzed in terms of feedback types including *surface-level feedback*, *clarification-level feedback* and *content-level feedback* (Paltridge et al., 2009). The students' revised drafts were subsequently analyzed in terms of the students' response to the teacher written feedback provided in their initial drafts.

The three categories of teacher written feedback used in this study and their applications are presented in table 1.

Table 1 Categories of teacher written feedback and their applications

Categories	Applications
Surface-level feedback	Corrective feedback on word choice and grammar
Clarification-level feedback	Comments requesting corrections or alterations to unclear issues
Content-level feedback	Comments focusing on the organization of information as well as the information itself

Analysis of students' responses to teacher written feedback

This analysis, which involves the examination of the students' revisions in response to the teacher written feedback, was adapted from the analysis of successful and unsuccessful revisions in students' essays developed by Conrad & Goldstein (1999). Student moves related to the teacher comments were classified into three types:

Complete response to teacher written commentary (CR) refers to student revision moves that matched the teacher's purpose for providing a particular comment. Student moves with this type of response took several forms, e.g. adding, deleting, substituting, moving words or phrases, copying a teacher-provided correction and rewriting a sentence or a paragraph.

Partial response to teacher written commentary (PR) refers to student revision moves made when the student attempted to revise an area commented on, but the revision did not match the teacher's purpose in providing the comment.

No response to teacher written commentary (NR) refers to student revision moves that were made when the student did not revise an area commented on by the teacher. In other words, the student made no change in his or her revised draft in response to the teacher comment provided in the initial draft; the student merely copied from the initial draft to the revised draft.

In this study, the analysis of teacher written comments and student moves in response to the teacher comments was performed by two coders. One of the coders was the researcher himself and the other coder was a Thai instructor who earned a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from a university in the U.S. and has taught English at the tertiary level in Thailand for over 20 years. The inter-coder agreement for the teacher written comments was 91%, and that for the moves in response to the teacher written comments was 93%

Results

In the present study, different numbers of teacher written comments were provided on students' initial drafts. Table 2 shows the number of written comments of each type.

Table 2 Number of written comments in each category

Types of Comments	Frequencies (%)
Surface-level feedback	566 (40.1)
Clarification-level feedback	308 (21.9)
Content-level feedback	534 (38)
Total	1,408

The study has also revealed the students' responses to the teacher written feedback. Table 3 indicates the number of student moves with complete, partial or no response to the comments.

Table 3 Responses to teacher written feedback

	CR (%)	PR (%)	NR (%)
Surface-level feedback	98.9	1.1	0
Clarification-level feedback	81.2	14.3	4.5
Content-level feedback	90.6	7.1	2.3

Responses to Surface-level Feedback (SL)

This type of feedback was the most frequently used in this study with 566 SL comments (40.1%) being provided. The comments of this type took the form of addition, substitution or deletion of items in students' drafts.

Regarding the students' responses to SL feedback, the data analysis reveals that the complete response was the most common (98.9%). In most cases of SL feedback, the students copied the teacher's corrections, whether they involved addition, substitution or deletion of words or phrases. There were only a few tokens of partial response and to the teacher's SL comments in the students' revised drafts. There was no token of no response for this type of feedback.

SL feedback was offered on the basis of the teacher's assessment of individual students' language proficiency and writing abilities. The teacher made a correction or added a word where he assumed that an individual student was unfamiliar with a certain use of an English word or would be incapable of correction of a certain error. For instance, in a student's draft

...some of Thais' ways of lives are changing and some of good beliefs will be changed based on cultures.

The teacher added the word "other," between the words "on" and "cultures," assuming that the student was unfamiliar with the use of "other" in her writing to make a contrast between entities. The teacher did not provide any explanation regarding the addition of "other."

In addition, the teacher provided correction for the surface errors that were considered minor and not worth distracting the students while revising their initial drafts with the task of self-correction. Again, the teacher provided the correction as a target-like model. An example of teacher correction of a minor error is the teacher correcting a personal pronoun. In the sentence

Since Thai people are adaptable to globalization, we enjoy living among the changes caused.

The teacher changed the personal pronoun "we" to "they" to refer to "Thai people" anaphorically. This

The teacher changed the personal pronoun “we” to “they” to refer to “Thai people” anaphorically. This substitution prevented distraction during revision and in this case the teacher believed that the student would understand why the correction was made.

Responses to Clarification-level feedback (CLL)

A total of 308 CLL comments (21.9%) were provided in this study. The CLL comments consisted of (1) questions, (2) short phrases, (3) general statements, (4) symbols (such as arrows, circles or question marks).

Based on the data analysis, the students generally made complete revisions in accordance with the CLL comments (81.2%). However, some of them made partial revisions (14.3%) or no revisions at all (4.5%). An example of CLL feedback involves the expansion of a student’s ideas to clarify an argument. The following extract has been taken from a cause-and-effect essay composed by a student.

.....AEON, a financial investor from Japan, is a good example to reflect the globalization. AEON is well known among the working class workers who work for low wages. *Why ??*
[Comment: No explanatory comments were offered to this sentence. Instead, the teacher put the question “why” and double question marks after the sentence.]

In the student’s revised draft, she added a reason to expand and clarify the sentence, explaining why “AEON is well known among the working class workers who work for low wages”. The revised draft is

.....AEON, a financial investor from Japan, is a good example to reflect the globalization. AEON is well known among the working class workers who work for low wages *since this is the only way for poor people to obtain the cash with fast approval, no guarantor, no difficulty, and simple documentations.*

The teacher used CLL comments to encourage the student to “expand” by giving a reason (See Halliday, 1994: 324). This type of feedback led to the complete revision of the student’s initial draft, enhancing paragraph development.

A relatively small number of the student moves had partial response to the CLL comments. Forty-four comments (14.3%) resulted in revisions that were not completely accurate. In these cases, the students’ revised drafts suggested that while the students noticed the comments on their initial

drafts and despite their attempt to revise their first drafts in accordance with the comments, their revision was not successful and did not match the teacher's purpose in making the comments.

In the following example, the student seemed to understand what she was supposed to do in her revision, in response to the CLL comment provided at the problematic area. However, in her revised draft she still had inappropriate use of cohesion. The following extract was taken from a body paragraph of a cause-and-effect essay.

Another reason of Thai poor economy is corruption. Our country loses a tremendous amount of money while the national wealth is illegal transformed into individual benefits. It is a negative image of Thailand. [Comment: What does "it" refer to?]

The teacher circled the personal pronoun "it" and put a question (as shown in the comment) under the pronoun. However, in the student's revised version, she changed the pronoun "it" to the demonstrative reference tie "this". Hence, her revised draft is

Another reason of Thai poor economy is corruption. Our country loses a tremendous amount of money while the national wealth is illegal transformed into individual benefits. *This is* a negative image of Thailand.

The teacher used the CLL feedback to suggest that the pronoun "it" needed revising, or changing. In this instance, it is apparent that the student realized that she would need to change the word "it" to another word. However, her revision was not complete or was partially complete because she used only the demonstrative pronoun "this," instead of a complete noun phrase containing a summarizing noun, to cataphorically refer to the preceding situation. An improved version should be

Another reason of Thai poor economy is corruption. Our country loses a tremendous amount of money while the national wealth is illegal transformed into individual benefits. *This problem has led to the* negative image of Thailand.

This instance suggests that the CLL feedback delivered to the student's initial draft so that she could improve her draft might not have been clear enough to help her find the most appropriate cohesive device to link the revised sentence to the preceding one. Hence, the partial response to the comment.

When student moves had no correspondence to the CLL comments, the students made no revision in response to the teacher feedback. For example, the teacher gave a CLL comment so that the

student would explain more clearly. The following extract has been taken from a body paragraph of a classification essay.

Who are these people?

Problem-solving skills are in the second category. I realize that these people can get their jobs done successfully. I was confronted with the significant problem in my previous firm. My team was preoccupied with a long term project that could not be completed in one month. We would be fired if we couldn't submit our customer's project by the due date.....

In this case, the student did not make any change to the noun phrase “these people” as she revised her initial draft. She left it as it was, instead of expanding the phrase by adding more specific information so that the sentence would read:

I realize that *people with these skills* can get their jobs done successfully.

To find out why the student made no revision in response to this comment, the teacher asked the student, and she said she did not know how to revise her writing.

The CLL feedback provided an opportunity for the students to self-correct, and a majority of cases, the students were able to respond completely to the comments or suggestions. The teacher used the less specific indications of symbols, questions and brief phrases and statements to direct the students' attention towards areas that needed revision. He expected that the students, when receiving this type of feedback, would know how to correct the errors or enhance cohesion in their writing once their attention was drawn to them.

Responses to Content-level feedback (COL)

In the present study, the COL comments were used the second most frequently after the SL feedback. A total of 534 COL comments (38%) were provided on the students' initial drafts. This type of feedback was specifically used to provide an opportunity for the students to resolve problems related to the organization or content in their writing.

In response to this type of feedback, most of the revisions were complete (90.6%), while only a few were partially complete (7.1%) and in a few other cases, no response was provided for revision at all (2.3%).

Some of the COL comments were brief and concise, while others were much longer, usually explaining a corresponding rule or providing a direction for revision. Some of the COL comments even combined more than one purpose; for instance, they provided an explanation or a reason for revision along with a specific direction for revising a particular section of a draft. For example, the teacher provided the following comment for a student to revise her draft for cohesion between the thesis statement and the body paragraphs.

The main problem with your organization is that your thesis statement at the end of your introductory paragraph does not reveal what your body paragraphs will be about [Identification of a problem]. You need to relate those two areas in your essay. So, when you rewrite, include the key words from the topic sentences of your body paragraphs in your thesis statement [Direction for revision]. Your thesis statement will be stronger and clearer if you use an essay map [Explanation for the need for revision].

The teacher used the COL feedback to help the students to reflect on the comment carefully and identify how the problematic areas should be resolved during their revision. This would also involve deleting a sentence or adding another sentence to make the text more coherent.

The COL feedback was utilized to provide opportunities for the students to self-correct. Instead of providing correction directly, the teacher used this type of feedback, which identified areas for revisions of material within students' developmental range.

Most of the student moves (90.6%) had complete response to the COL comments. This suggests that the teacher's purpose in using this type of feedback to provide opportunities for self-correction was fulfilled. The following example illustrates the students' complete response to the teacher's comments.

One effect of globalization is the advancement of communication technology. The technological revolution has provided a faster way to communicate. Thai people are now able to keep in touch with the outside world affordably.
[Comments: This paragraph is too short. If you can give some examples to show how Thais can communicate with the outside world, your paragraph will be better developed. Also, think about how you can introduce an example.]

In the student's revised draft, she added three examples introducing the first using the conjunctive expression "for example" and introducing the last using "moreover".

One effect of globalization is the advancement of communication technology. The technological revolution has provided a faster way to communicate. Thai people are now able to keep in touch with the outside world affordably. *For example*, real-time online meetings across the countries are possible via the wireless Internet web camera. Parents can make a live chat with their children studying in the United States. *Moreover*, many young people access the Internet regularly and know what books are now being published in the England or what top hit songs are in the Billboard chart.

The teacher used COL comments to encourage the student to “elaborate” through apposition (See Halliday, 1994: 324) using a conjunctive expression (“for example,” in this case) to exemplify her argument that Thai people are now able to contact the outside world conveniently. In this instance, the student also used “extension” for positive addition; specifically, she introduced a final example using the conjunctive expression “moreover”. This COL feedback led to complete revision of the student’s initial draft and enhanced the use of cohesion, as well as paragraph development.

However, some student moves were found to have partial response to the COL comments. In these cases, the students’ revised drafts indicated that the students failed to match the teacher’s purpose in making the comments.

In the following example, an extract from a classification essay, a COL comment was provided so that the student could revise the topic sentences in her expository essay. In the following extract, the introductory paragraph is first presented with the last sentence serving as a thesis statement, which reveals the major topics to be discussed in the subsequent body paragraphs. Then the COL comments are provided below the introductory paragraph. (The teacher’s purpose in writing the comments here is to draw the student’s attention to the relationship between the thesis statement and the body paragraphs.) Following the comments are the first sentences of the body paragraphs of the essay, presented in the chronological order. However, the topic sentence of each body paragraph does not reveal the main topic of the paragraph as introduced earlier in the thesis statement, resulting in a lack of global cohesion in the essay, even though the student used the sequence signals, i.e. *first*, *second* and *finally*. In the student’s revised draft, the student’s correspondence to the comment was apparently incomplete; therefore, her revision was still not very effective.

School is the place to educate students and also the place for new technologies. I have been teaching for more than fifteen years and notice that there are three categories of teachers

when using technologies as criteria. *There are teachers who are ready to adapt themselves to new technologies, teachers who are somewhat ready to do, and teachers who are not ready for the new technologies.* (The last sentence serves as the thesis statement of this essay.)

[Comments: You can make your essay more cohesive by rewriting the topic sentence of each paragraph. The topic sentences should reiterate the major points presented in the thesis statement.]

First, these teachers are usually in their twenties or in the early thirties. Most of them have knowledge in computer and can operate it effectively.....

Second, these teachers are usually in their late thirties to mid forties. These teachers have limited knowledge in technologies and computer.....

Finally, these teachers are usually in their late forties to fifties and get used to using traditional method of teaching such as merely talking and writing on the blackboard or the whiteboard.....”

In the student’s revised draft, the topic sentence of each paragraph was revised. However, it seemed that the student did not fully understand how to revise her topic sentences according to the COL comments provided. Even though she changed the cohesive device used at the beginning of each body paragraph, she did not add to the topic sentences the major points she included in the thesis statement. Instead, she simply changed the sequence signals “first,” “second” and “finally” to “for the first category,” “for the second category” and “for the third category” respectively. Consequently, her response to the feedback could be considered to be partial and her revision was regarded as being incomplete and not sufficiently coherent. In fact, the student only changed each sequence signal to a nominal group signifying sequence using the head noun “category”.

All the above examples show how the teacher delivered feedback on student’s first drafts and how the students responded to the feedback. In most cases, student revision was successful; in some instances, unsuccessful revision was performed, or no response was provided.

Discussion

All of the students in the study used the comments to revise their writing as they moved along from the beginning to the end of their initial drafts. Regarding the student moves to teacher written feedback, it appeared in this study that the majority of the teacher comments were responded to with complete response in three ways:

1. the students copied the teacher’s corrections.

2. the students appropriately added a word, a phrase or a clause.
3. the students appropriately made changes to text.

With regard to the student moves with partial or no response to the commentary, there are several possible reasons for the mismatch:

1. the students did not understand the teacher comments.
2. the students were not able to change the language or writing using the teacher comments.
3. the students chose not to make a revision.

The teacher written feedback served two main purposes in the present study. First, surface-level feedback or direct correction was used to provide feedback on the form of the students' writing with a specific focus on word choice and grammar. Second, clarification-level feedback and content-level feedback were used in the form of directions, questions and statements about language usage and writing conventions to provide both form-focused and content-focused feedback. Feedback delivery and revision are a type of social interaction that occurs when a teacher provides written feedback on students' initial drafts and the students modify their drafts in response to the teacher feedback.

Feedback can provide useful language information to the learner while making connections between his or her current interlanguage and the second language (Ferris, 2003). Feedback can also provide metalinguistic information that may raise learners' consciousness regarding the second language (Gass, 1997). In addition, when students have opportunities to receive feedback on their writing, they can analyze language while producing modified output (Swain, 1995). It is evident that opportunities to modify output are available to any student who makes revisions in response to the feedback provided through teacher written comments on the content and language usage in student writing. It can be claimed that students and teachers can negotiate meaning through modifications of input and output in writing. In other words, when a teacher writes comments on student writing, a negotiation for meaning is induced, and meaningful input is made comprehensible through modifications (in the form of expansions, examples, etc.).

Even though the students expected their teacher to give feedback mainly on their grammatical errors in their first drafts, in general feedback on content, rhetoric, and organization should take priorities so that the students can develop ideas that they plan to include in their writing more clearly

and accurately and can avoid writing clear, well-organized, but inaccurate ideas (Campbell, 1998). After providing comments on content, rhetoric, and organization, the teacher can then move on to the sentence-level problems of grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Positive results were found in the students' writing when the students were required to revise their initial drafts in response to teacher written feedback. These results mirror the results yielded from some previous studies on teacher feedback, especially error correction, followed by students' revisions, concluding that writing accuracy could improve during the revision process subsequent to the students' receiving feedback (Ferris, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2006; Zamel, 1985). A fair amount of empirical evidence also advocates the positive effects of revision subsequent to feedback delivery on students' accuracy in their writing "either in a short term or long term" (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

The findings also reveal that in the students' revised drafts, errors were reduced most when in response to corrective feedback. It can be stated that student writing improved most as a result of this most explicit feedback, which naturally accommodated the students' revision as they made changes in accordance with the corrections provided; in many cases they simply copied the teacher's corrections on their revised drafts. The results in this study corresponded to Chandler's (2003) results, concluding that direct feedback or correction by the teacher was the most effective of the four types of feedback (correction, underlining and description, description, and underlining in this respective order) provided to student writing. The superiority of direct feedback over the other feedback types was probably because it is "the fastest and the easiest way for them (students) to revise" (291).

In response to the teacher written comments, the student moves reflected three types of response to the purpose of the comments: complete, partial and no response. These responses refer to the degree to which a student move resulted in a revision that matched the teacher's purpose in providing a comment. In this study, the great majority of the student moves responded to the comments completely. The fact that there were some moves that had partial response to the commentary suggests that the students consistently put their great efforts in responding to the teacher comments though not successfully. This, in turn, reflects the students' perception of the teacher feedback as important and valuable as in the Thai culture, teachers' advice or suggestions are mostly expected to be followed.

In this study, the student moves in response to the teacher written comments were similar in that the students all copied the corrections provided by the teacher into their revised drafts. Moreover, most of the students seemed to have noticed the comments and made revisions related to the comments. The appropriately revised output indicated that the student successfully demonstrated linguistic or rhetorical ability to fulfill the objective of the comment, even though s/he might have sought assistance from any of the potentially helpful resources. In the few cases where the student moves had no response to the teacher comments, several reasons can be offered on the basis of the students' responses in the questionnaires. First, the student did not understand the comment; second, the student did not have the related language or writing skill to revise their writing; third, due to time constraints, the student did not have enough time to revise properly; fourth, they disagreed with the teacher comments provided; and finally, the teacher comments were unclear or ineffective.

Clearly, the students were able to manipulate the second language in response to the teacher comments. The findings indicate that the students received a great deal of feedback both on form and on content, feedback with metalinguistic information, input with requests for clarification and modified input with expansions. The students' revised drafts revealed that the students were able to use the input to modify their writing by making additions, deletions and substitutions with respect to information in their initial drafts, thereby increasing readability their writing. To accommodate students' successful revision, teachers need to pay careful attention to the ways they provide feedback on student writing. Effective feedback on students' initial drafts can significantly contribute to their effective revision.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, in most cases, the graduate students were able to make complete or successful revisions at all levels of feedback provided. They mainly relied on the teacher's comments to rewrite or improve their writing in the initial drafts. Even though some of the revisions were not successful, they showed their attempt to modify their writing in response to the feedback. There were relatively low incidences where no response was provided due to the students' inability to make revisions or to understand feedback.

The research findings of this study suggest several important pedagogical implications. First of all, the overall research results suggest that feedback and revision can contribute to the improvement of student writing. Teacher written feedback can provide students with an additional layer of scaffolding to develop their writing skills, promote accuracy and clear ideas, and develop an understanding of written genres (Hyland, 2003). In the context of this study, teacher written feedback should be customized to facilitate students' revision. In addition, a combination of all types of written comments should be provided on the basis of the student's proficiency level and the level of difficulty regarding the writing problem being addressed. However, there is concern over the amount of feedback provided on each piece of student writing. That is, an excessive amount of feedback might be overwhelming and cause confusion to students. Content-level and clarification-level feedback might be delivered for students' first revision and surface-level feedback might be provided to accommodate their second revision, although two or more revisions would consume more of the teacher's time.

Additionally, revision is an important activity that can help improve student writing and, in turn, contribute to the development of a better attitude toward L2 writing. Students should be encouraged to revise and rewrite their essays throughout a writing course so that they will be motivated enough to become independent EFL writers who can perform self-editing and self-revision later in their life (e.g. Ferris, 1995). Then, writing would not be only a tedious assignment that EFL/ESL students are required to complete on a weekly or fortnightly basis or just a piece of material to be marked and used as part of course evaluation.

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Biodata

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