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A Qualitative Study of Corrective Feedback

by

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A Thesis

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Abstract

Teachers around the globe strive to spur writers on to academic excellence by offering
various means of corrective feedback on written tasks. The research presented in this paper has
sought to discover the type of feedback teachers believe results in the greatest amount of learner
uptake in current and future writing tasks. Data from ten face-to-face interviews with English as
a Second Language instructors from primary level to Post-Secondary education have been
analyzed and compared in an effort to discover the type of feedback instructors believe aids
learners in developing writing skills. Interview questions sought to differentiate between direct
and indirect feedback and how teachers implemented these types of feedback in classroom
practice. Participants from this study supported the incorporation of a combination of direct and
indirect feedback methods when assessing second language writers. They stressed the
importance of assigning purpose to each writing task, clearly explaining necessary requirements,
and delineating a timeline for completion of progressive steps for the assignment. All ten of the
participants reported that they offered written and/or oral corrective feedback to students. They
believed that when learners understood why an error was marked, they were more able to
incorporate the feedback into current and future writing tasks, thus becoming better writers.

Keywords: corrective feedback, indirect feedback, direct feedback

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Chapter 1: A Qualitative Study of Corrective Feedback

Diversity in language and culture abounds in nations around the world. Most countries boast of a trade language that enables residents who hail from tribal descent and urban centers to communicate with each other when buying and/or selling goods and services. As a result of the universality of technology, English is rising to the forefront as a means of communication through its widespread availability in the most remote places on earth. Students enroll in English classes not only in an effort to comprehensibly communicate face-to-face or via technology, but also to improve marketability in the workforce. Many would argue, Phillipson (2013) among them, that English can be seen as a force of imperialism, colonization hegemony and linguicide (killing off of local, indigenous languages). Pan and Block (2011) described that university students in China must pass a College English Test to earn a bachelor's degree because employers from China base job eligibility on whether applicants can speak English, even if it is not necessary to perform day-to-day tasks.

Moving beyond speaking English to writing with a degree of accuracy has proven challenging for second language learners. Chen, Carger, and Smith (2017) described a sense of urgency in aiding second language learner's written production by saying that "writing ability in English is critical for future academic performance and career development" (p. 29). They further explained deficits L2 writers encounter, which included a lack of motivation to write and an inability to know how to compose written tasks. In order for an ESL student to ameliorate or improve written competency in a target language, namely English, Jiang and Yu (2014) found that the ability to attain "professional and academic success in all disciplines depends, at least partly, upon writing skills" (p.35). Second language learners more readily develop proficiency in speaking, listening and reading skills as researched by Chen et al. (2017) in a study focused on

applying students' "funds of knowledge" (p. 29) or previous experiences as a basis for expressing thoughts in written form. Similarly, English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors face difficulties in knowing which language errors to correct and how much correction should be noted before student motivation diminishes. Instructors utilize an array of direct and indirect corrective feedback methods in accordance with their beliefs regarding the type of corrective feedback that yields learner uptake in current and future writing tasks.

ESL students also encounter an inability to discover errors for themselves or a lack of understanding as to why the error was marked. Lo, Wang, and Yeh (2009) stated, "Research findings showed that students' major difficulty in error correction lies in their failure to detect errors" (p. 128). Other research by Hung and Young (2015) described language learner's difficulty in writing as stemming from language competence. Their research showed that students relied heavily on technological sources like the Internet, word processing programs and the sharing of files with peers, tutors and instructors. When considering grammatical, structural or content errors made by English language learners, understandability over accuracy rose to the forefront as criterion for assessing writing. Teachers have implemented scaffolding techniques by modeling good writing for their class, guiding them as a group to compose a similar piece of writing and finally assigning learners to write independently. They have introduced and instructed students on forms of revision like self-editing, technological review, peer review, or teacher conferencing in the early stages of writing as an aid in composition tasks. They have also established a rewriting component after major assessments so students have an opportunity to improve their grade.

ESL teachers, specifically trained in assisting language learners to adjust to the culture and community in which they now live, have focused on the four macro-skills of

communication—speaking, reading, listening and writing--to develop fluency in English. L2 learners parallel assimilation to English grammar usage with similarities from their language of origin. Language educators aim to equip students with appropriate vocabulary, grammar and procedural instruction for current and future written productions. In light of the widespread use of technology as an aid for writing, academic writing skills have decreased in competency and fluency, as observed by Chen et al. (2017). This phenomenon has piqued the interest of educators as they have investigated reasons for the decline in writing proficiency. Ferris, Brown, Liu, Eugenia, and Stine (2011) noted that there are growing numbers of second language students enrolled in college composition courses. According to Lo et al. (2009), writing to communicate is an essential skill for professional and personal use that can be developed by a university education. It is believed that corrective feedback on written tasks supports students who read it and understand how to implement changes in current and future assignments.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When considering second language writing challenges like competency and motivation, this research data stemmed from interviews with ESL teachers regarding their beliefs about which method(s) of corrective feedback achieved noticeable improvements in written production. In an effort to align the reader's understanding with the author's purpose, a definition of terms was prepared to lay the groundwork for clarity. This section investigated studies on the types of corrective feedback teachers believe strengthens learner competency and motivation in written tasks. Along with researching types of written corrective feedback often offered on written tasks, it also outlined a debate that challenged teachers who utilized corrective feedback techniques. John Truscott (1996) spearheaded a controversial notion that instructors should offer no feedback on written to second language writers. Dana Ferris (1999) challenged this idea and verbally sparred with Truscott about this matter, described under the Controversy section of the Literature Review. A questionnaire for ESL teachers was prepared and included in Appendices A and B of this proposal. The researcher understood that not all teachers would welcome the interview tactic, therefore, the goal was to locate at least ten willing ESL teachers for participation in this study. Data from the interviews was summatively analyzed. In other words, it examined whether teachers believed the countless hours of providing written corrective feedback actually assisted learners in becoming better writers? Finally, based on the results from the data, it offered conclusive remarks regarding the findings of this research and a method or methods that effected noticeable improvement of writing.

Definition of Terms

In an effort to clarify terms that appear throughout this thesis, the following definitions described the author's intentions as they appear in this paper. *Corrective feedback* will refer both

direct and indirect feedback offered by teachers. Corrective feedback may occur electronically through using a word processing system or by sharing a task with the instructor via technological means or it could occur in a written or verbal manner as offered by a teacher, tutor or peer. Tai, Lin, and Yang (2015) asserted that face-to-face feedback, along with technological clues assisted students in the writing process. Lambert (2015) described the importance of corrective feedback in that it aligns with active learning, is expected by students, and plays an important role in assisting students with writing accuracy. Corrective feedback can take the form of *direct feedback* as defined by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) as occurring "when the teacher identifies the error and provides the correct form. *Indirect feedback* refers to situations when the teacher indicates that an error has been made but does not provide a correction, thereby leaving the student to diagnose and correct it" (p. 193). Indirect feedback assumes that the learner will be able to decipher the codes or clues regarding an error and have the grammatical capacity to provide the correction. Instructors have the option of prioritizing feedback by only marking two or three major patterns of errors or they can mark all errors in a written task.

Teacher Beliefs

Educational institutions prepare future teachers for the classroom through instruction in learning theories, teaching methods and practicums. In recent years, research has begun to focus on discovering how teachers form personal beliefs about grammar instruction and how they exercise these beliefs in classroom settings. Lev Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which he defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Residing under the umbrella of the sociocultural theory, ZPD

recognized learners as social beings that have the potential to develop through interaction with culture, family members, peers and institutions. ZPD examined the quality of mediation between an expert and novice or in the words of VanPatten and Williams (2015), "what one can do today with mediation is indicative of what one will be able to do independently in the future" (p. 212). Scaffolding, a name for the process of mentoring students towards independence supports Vygotsky's ZPD; it advocated that interaction between an expert and novice aided a learner in developing a targeted skill. Scaffolding guides students towards independence through assistance in a series of four steps according to Jiang and Yu (2014),

> *Modeling* is the stage at which the teacher helps students with clear explanations and constructive guidance. *Practice* is the stage where students are given opportunities to practice different learning tasks. *Fading* is the stage at which the teacher gradually decreases his support in order to have the students bear their learning responsibilities…*Independent application* is the stage where students are able to give peers appropriate and valid feedback independently by making comparisons with peers' reviews. (p. 36)

In this way, teacher support gradually lessened while learners developed independent writing skills. VanPatten and Williams (2015) supported this idea by adding that initially a teacher demonstrated how to construct a paragraph or story, and then the class repeated the same process together. Finally, students were tasked with writing independently.

Simon Borg conducted instrumental research by comparing how teacher beliefs related to classroom practice. In a study of ESL instruction in an English language institute in Malta, Borg (1998) found that classroom practices were determined by a teacher's pedagogical belief system that was influenced by their education, professional experiences and the context of instruction.

This study researched how teachers instructed students on the emic workings of the English language. He collected data through conducting pre and post interviews with the teacher and through in-class observation. In this study, Borg discovered that the teacher's pedagogical system was "profoundly influenced by his initial training" (p. 29). Therefore, he centered grammar instruction on student errors, even though this type of instruction had produced negative experiences early in his learning career.

In another study, Borg (2011) researched the influence of teacher education on teacher beliefs and practices. Six female candidates enrolled in Delta (Diploma in English language teaching to adults) voluntarily participated in this study. Data were collected from preliminary, audio-recorded interviews and from analyzing Delta course work like lesson plans, essays, and reflective writing. Prior to participating in the Delta training, one teacher knew in her mind what she believed about language teaching, but only after completing the course, she able to articulate these beliefs. Student motivation, centering instruction on the learner, or even patterning teaching strategies according to the way in which a student learns represented the beliefs of participating instructors. A final teacher expressed that the course helped her to define and incorporate her beliefs about instruction into classroom practice. Borg wrote that teachers' beliefs did not change as a result of Delta, instead, their beliefs were strengthened because of being equipped with the ability to verbalize and implement the beliefs. As a result, Borg found that teacher beliefs became more aligned with classroom practices.

Regardless of an instructor's core beliefs, they were, according to Borg (2011), a key component in the development of teacher practices. He defined beliefs as "propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change" (Borg, 2011, pp. 370-371). If

a language teacher believed that instruction should focus on grammar terminology and rules, they design lessons around these core beliefs. If they believed communicative competence as prime importance, then lessons will center on class interaction. The assessment criterion also reflected core beliefs. Teacher cognition remained fairly consistent and set the stage for one's teaching practice.

Articulating ones beliefs has proven challenging for instructors as they have immersed themselves into the routineness of meeting the demands of class preparation, teaching and assessing. Unfortunately, teacher beliefs and practices faced a discrepancy described by Borg (2009), as the divide that lies between how teachers believe they should teach and how they actually teach. Even though beliefs and practices do not always coincide, a teacher's core beliefs form the foundation of his/her teaching style (Borg). Professional experience encouraged the development of teacher cognition in the discovery of strategies that motivated students to learn. Students often already knew the information being taught; the problem was that they did not have words in the target language to express themselves. Aligning student beliefs and expectations with teacher beliefs and practices pinpointed primary challenge ESL educators faced.

Phipps and Borg (2009) researched the tension between teacher beliefs and practices. They found that teacher beliefs undergo a positive or negative influence resulting from personal experience. Beliefs acted as a filter through which teachers interpreted new information and experiences. Beliefs outweighed the effects of teacher education in influencing classroom practices. These beliefs exerted long-term influence on a teacher's instructional practice. And the beliefs interacted bi-directionally with experience. Beliefs inferred practice and practice can lead to a change in beliefs.

Written Corrective Feedback

Educators differed in their approach for assisting EFL writers to improve writing. Ferris et al. (2011) described opposite perspectives from her research regarding how two university instructors viewed assessing second language writing tasks. One instructor considered language competence an obstacle and focused on major written inconsistencies while overlooking minor grammatical errors. The other instructor expected L2 students to write with the same grammatical and content fluency as native speaking students. Hartshorn et al. (2010) found that practice in writing tasks must be frequent and authentic for students to attain competency. Students expected to receive corrective feedback and teachers expected to give feedback on written work. Language professionals believed that students reviewed corrective feedback and learned from errors. This belief assumed that students understood the reasoning behind the error and could correct it. Ferris (1999) mentioned that corrective feedback aided students in L2 composition even though it required a lot of the teacher's time and could take a week or more for papers to be returned to students. A case study by Min (2013) who researched how to give feedback that aligned with a teacher's beliefs, found that teachers and students share similar expectations about feedback. Students expected instructors to point out surface and content errors, and teachers expected to give correction. In fact, Min (2013) found that 94% of the ESL student participants thought the teacher should correct all the errors, while only 46% of teacher participants endorsed the same idea.

When considering the time exerted at composing corrective feedback and the impact it makes on future written tasks, Diab (2005) found that even though content errors improved, there was no substantial change in surface level errors. Min (2013) advocated for corrective feedback that selectively addressed errors, understood student intentions, identified problems, and clearly

explained grammatical shortcomings by making appropriate suggestions. Furthermore, she found that understanding student intentions presented the greatest difficulty as the influences of one's worldview impacted writing styles and word choice.

Stary (2010) researched ESL student's responses regarding what they do with the feedback offered on writing tasks. She reported the type of feedback teachers offered, like direct feedback through recasting errors or indirect feedback through offering prompts played a significant role in impacting student writing. While students said they would make the appropriate changes by following the feedback, they often failed to carry through with the revision. Instead, she discovered that students deleted troublesome parts of their essay or guessed at a correction prompt like spelling without consulting a dictionary. Interestingly, she reported that short, concise recasts produced greater accuracy than in-depth explanations. Furthermore, she discussed the impact of positive and negative feedback and noted that negative feedback decreases performance, regardless of age. Results from her research showed that students more frequently corrected recasts because they clearly knew which error to correct and less frequently corrected prompts due to lacking skills to understand why an error was marked. She also noted that students paid attention to in-text comments and often ignored end comments. She concluded that the "clarity of feedback was correlated to student revision" (p.79). Students tended to disregard what they did not understand.

It was essential to determine which types of errors to address in an effort to maintain consistency for learners. Direct feedback regarding the nature of the error, as defined by Lambert (2015) and Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), garnered a correction in the current task, but promoted passive learning. Even though direct feedback provided the least frustration, learners may not have understood the reasoning behind why the error was marked. She continued by

contrasting direct feedback with indirect feedback that identified the general location and number of errors without explicitly identifying them. Indirect feedback promoted active learning as students edit their own work, but may not result in learner uptake regarding the nature of the error because of a lack of understanding. Ferris (2011) added that the importance of making corrective feedback effective aided students in understanding the why behind the errors. Focused feedback where instructors targeted a limited number of errors aided in maintaining consistency, as opposed to unfocused corrective feedback where all errors were marked. Unfocused feedback has the potential to demotivate students (Lambert, 2015). Upon receiving feedback, the learner either read the teacher's notes, gleaning information on how to improve writing or ignored the comments altogether. The goal of corrective feedback is to motivate students to make necessary changes and become good writers, not add stress to an already difficult task.

Ferris (1999) supported the integration of corrective feedback by noting that even though feedback varied from teacher to teacher, it alerted students to content, structural or grammatical errors. Diab (2005) concurred with Ferris by stressing that a paper with no red marks or comments robs students of the ability to know where to start revising. Heift (2010) found that the lack of feedback had the potential to lead to anxiety, lack of motivation and lack of confidence in the teacher. She graphically described adults as learners that have fossilized and make little progress in language learning without corrective feedback. As learners engaged in academic writing opportunities, Tai et al. (2015) articulated the importance of written corrective feedback by saying that it played an "irreplaceable role as a medium between teacher and learners" (p. 285). Li and Hegelheimer (2013) noted that corrective feedback highlighted weaknesses in writing, even though it was burdensome and time-consuming. Lambert (2015) found that

effective corrective feedback motivates students to keep writing, despite the difficulties

encountered in writing in a second language.

Controversy: Corrective Feedback

Truscott (1996) championed a controversial idea that proposed that language instructors

should abandon grammar correction altogether as it does not effectively produce noticeable

improvements in future writing assignments. Truscott (1996) boldly stated, "grammar correction

has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328). His article entitled *The Case*

Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes rocked the beliefs and practices of second

language instructors. He reasoned that grammar correction demotivated L2 writers and robbed

them of their confidence. It did not provide long-term learner uptake on future writing tasks

because learners may not understand the reasoning behind the errors or how to correct them.

Furthermore, he deduced that the lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be expected

because of instructors' time constraints and the varying abilities of language teachers in

'detecting and correcting' grammatical errors, a phrase coined by Jiang and Yu (2014). He

believed that students would, with practice, eventually discover these errors and self-correct

without assistance.

A debate ensued, spearheaded by Ferris (1999), when she published a response to

Truscott's bold rejection of corrective feedback in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*. She,

along with but not limited to, Brown (2012) and Lambert (2015), described the time-consuming

and exhausting task of correcting written assignments. Even though she wanted to agree with

Truscott's (1996) statement regarding abandoning grammar correction, she stated that his

conclusions were "premature and overly strong" (p. 2). She rebutted his arguments by pointing

out two main weaknesses with his assertion, "The problem of definition and the problem of

support" (p. 3). Ferris (1999) observed that Truscott (1996) broad-brushed his definition of grammar correction by not defining exactly what types of errors to address or what standard would be used to determine accuracy. Furthermore, she described effective grammar correction as "selective, prioritized and clear" (p. 4), which, she believed, has assisted some L2 learners in improving writing. When considering the problem of support, Ferris (1999) reported that Truscott (1996) included too many variables like the length of time to complete the research, subjects studied, instructional methods, type of feedback received and research design. Finally, Ferris (1999) accused Truscott (1996) of inaccurately performing research without incorporating a control group and of exaggerating the results of his research by dismissing data that contradicted his premise.

Ferris (1999), on the other hand, supported the integration of corrective feedback by noting that even though feedback varies from teacher to teacher, it alerted students to content, structural or grammatical errors. In her defense, Ferris (1999) agreed with Truscott's (1996) statement, "There is some reason to think that syntactic, morphological, and lexical knowledge are acquired in different manners. If this is the case, then probably no single form of correction can be effective for all three" (p. 343). As a language instructor, Ferris (1999) believed in training students to "identify and correct patterns of frequent and serious errors" (p. 5) and subsequently provided them with specific instruction regarding the rules and reasoning for correcting the patterns of errors. This method mirrored the previously discussed scaffolding model where instructors guided students towards independence by modeling good writing and building on skills they have previously learned.

Truscott (1999) refuted Ferris' (1999) accusations by saying that language teachers have trouble accepting another point of view because grammar correction has been the norm.

Furthermore, he mentioned that just because students expect to receive correction, does not mean it should be given. In his teaching career, he found that a grammar correction free environment did not led to rebellion, frustration, lack of motivation or confidence in his students, instead he believed learners were encouraged to experiment with more complex ways of writing, rather than simplifying. Truscott (1999) believed that there was insufficient evidence regarding the effectiveness of grammar correction to continue this practice with non-native writers. Therefore, he opposed the assumption that grammar correction reduced errors in future written tasks. Finally, Truscott (1999) questioned Ferris' (1999) strategy training for self-editing. He argued that Ferris (1999) made no distinction between grammar correction and strategy training; therefore, students would not have enough information to make appropriate corrections. Truscott (1999) called for evidence, for proof that grammar correction, without a doubt, results in long-term improvements in written tasks. He wanted proof that writers readily expanded their horizons by experimenting with a variety of writing styles. Fundamentally, he believed that more research regarding effective grammar correction would aid educators.

Summary

By laying a foundation for this study regarding how teacher beliefs impact classroom practice regarding corrective feedback, terms that related to types of corrective feedback offered on written tasks were defined. Data from previous research regarding teacher beliefs was examined and summarized. Simon Borg (2011) initiated studies that investigated whether teacher beliefs aligned with classroom practices. Researchers like Tai et al. (2015), Li and Hegelheimer (2013), and Min (2013) supported the usage of error correction in that it alerted students to grammatical inconsistencies. Stary (2010) suggested that short recasts effected more change than long explanations. Truscott's (1996) bold announcement that educators should disband with

grammar correction rocked the status quo of ESL educators and a debate ensued. Upon examining the controversy from an outsider's perspective, it appeared that Truscott's (1996) article caused educators to re-evaluate and refine commonly practiced grammar correction methods. Truscott (1999) chafed against the pro-correction bias that represented the norm. He believed that a correction free zone encouraged creativity and experimentation with more sophisticated writing. On the other hand, Ferris (1999) believed that instead of completely negating all error correction, instructors should make their corrections "selective, prioritized and clear" (p. 4). Students expected correction, instructors believed it is useful and believed it resulted in improved writing. Ferris (1999) instructed students in self-editing strategies as one means of feedback. On that basis, Ferris believed that corrective feedback should continue to have a place in second language writing classrooms.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

Information gleaned from this limited sampling of 10 ESL instructor interviews in northwest Minnesota and Wisconsin provided the basis for this research. Questions in the interviews centered on what form(s), if any, of corrective feedback, teachers believe aided learners on written tasks. The research examined what type of corrective feedback teachers have implemented and believed as beneficial in improving current and future written tasks. It provided insight into some common challenges and successes ESL teachers have encountered when instructing second language learners in the writing process. Addressing this purpose leads to the research questions:

1. Which method(s) of corrective feedback do teachers believe strengthens second language writing tasks?

2. Do teachers report that students incorporate corrective feedback into future writing tasks?

Chapter 4: Method

In this qualitative study, ethnographic data from teacher interviews were analyzed. The interview elements, as defined below, were based on Spradley's (1979) book *The Ethnographic Interview*. The goal of the interviews was to discover the method of corrective feedback that teachers believe aids language learners in improving writing skills. This section describes the participants, instruments used, and procedure as it related to answering the research questions.

Participants

The researcher conducted twelve face-to-face, audio-recorded interviews with ESL teachers from the upper Midwest section of the United States. Eight of the audio recordings were stored on a remote site hosted by Otter and could have been used for further voice recognition research. All 12 of the respondents were notified of the possible breach of privacy and reminded of the option to withdraw their interview data at any time. Ten of the 12 gave permission to continue with the research. The final two teachers did not respond to the researcher's emails so the data will reflect only 10 participants. All of the teachers were Americans. The interviewees spanned a broad range of educational emphases with four primary (all females), four secondary (one male and three females), and two post-secondary (one male and one female) for a total of two male and eight female participants. Seven of the participants had an earned master's degree in TESL, while the other three had received on-the-job ESL training as they honed their teaching skills. The number of years of ESL teaching experience ranged between 3 and 29 years, with the mean number resting at 11.7 years. In light of the wide range of reported experience, the standard deviation was calculated at 7.99 years of experience. Of the 10 teachers, four of them had experience teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China, Mexico, Poland, and

Turkey before teaching ESL in the United States. One of the four teachers with EFL experience

also served with the United States Army in Military Intelligence. Table 1 describes this data.

Table 1

Teacher Overview

Teacher	Gender	Education	Age Taught	Experience	Overseas Experience	Military
A	F	MA	Primary	29		
B	F	MA	Primary	5	Mexico	
C	F	BA	Primary	11	Poland	
D	F	MA	Primary	8		
E	F	MA	Secondary	3		
F	M	BA	Secondary	11		
G	F	MA	Secondary	16		
H	F	BA	Secondary	9	China	
K	M	MA	Post-Secondary	5	Turkey	Yes
M	F	MA	Post-Secondary	20		
Totals	2 Male, 8 Female	3BA 7MA		Mean = 11.7 years, Standard Deviation = 7.99 yrs		

Criterion necessary for participation in this study included at least one full year of current

full-time involvement in an ESL classroom, willingness to participate in the research and

adequate time to complete the approximate one-hour interview. Initially, the teachers were asked

to voluntarily give 60-90 minutes of their time for the interview, but all of the interviews lasted

between 30-50 minutes.

In responding to the question of how they became interested in teaching ESL (Q9), each

of the 10 participants voluntarily explained that after they were introduced to ESL students, they

never looked back. Teacher A expressed love for people of other countries and languages. Early

in Teacher B's career, ESL kids would be placed in her class and she did not know what to do

with them, so she started out treating them like everyone else. Then she went to Mexico taught English, loved it and pursued further ESL training and adjusted her technique for ESL learners. Teacher C began her teaching career as a history teacher and realized that she wanted to teach ESL when that program was introduced at the university she attended. In the process of deciding whether she wanted to teach Spanish or work with Spanish speaking students, Teacher D realized that she really wanted to teach ESL. Teacher E also wanted to teach Spanish but realized that the teachers she learned the most Spanish language from were native speakers. Consequently, she switched her focus to teaching ESL because English was her first language. Teacher F had no intention of returning to the cultural diversity of his home town after completing his Elementary Education degree, but as life unfolded, that is the location where he currently teaches ESL. He expressed, "I really had a heart to work with…our demographics that we have here." Teacher G had earned degrees in art and history and as she went back to get her teaching degree, her first practicum found her in an ESL room and from that point on she changed her focus to teaching ESL. Teacher H took a 1-month trip to China to teach English during her a college term break and discovered that she loved teaching English. Teacher K, with a linguistic background, used money from his GI Bill to complete a master's degree in TESOL. He also taught English in Turkey. Finally, Teacher M, "Got hooked," when she worked as a college tutor in a university writing center with ESL students. From reading these responses, one can begin to grasp the passion these teachers have to assist non-native speakers in learning the culture and language of America. Besides teaching ESL, two of the teachers had experience instructing in a dual language classroom where they taught part of the day in English and the other part of the day in Spanish. This routine alternated from week to week, so students gained exposure to studying all subjects in both languages, except for Math. Math instruction was

always given in English. The dual language classrooms hosted both Latinos and White students. Latino students learned English, while White students learned Spanish.

When asked whether participants preferred teaching newcomers, intermediates or advanced level students, teachers described different reasons why they enjoyed teaching each level. Eight teachers expressed partiality towards newcomers because they are, according to Teacher A, "Like an empty slate and you can write on them, what they just soak it in." Similarly, Teacher F expressed, "It is fun because the growth is so exponential." Teacher H agreed by adding, "Working with students who are just being able to put sentences together and communicate…You can see their progress so fast." In contrast, Teacher M, expressed that she had no experience with the newest learners. She stated, "I have never worked with brand new learners, to be honest with you, because at the college level, you have to be beyond that true beginner state."

Four instructors (Teachers A, C, E, and F) described that they like teaching all levels of learners. Teacher E concurred with this statement by saying, "Oh, all of them, I think for different reasons." Students arrive in her class at a lower reading level and she endeavored to "bump them up" to a higher level as defined by WIDA standards by the time they leave her class. According to the Minnesota Department of Education https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/el/, WIDA standards set forth goals for mastering academic English. These standards have been divided into six levels for the macro skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teachers aim to engage students in mastering these skills set forth by WIDA. Achieving these goals enables learners to exit the ESL program and attend classes with their peers. WIDA standards as described by the University of Wisconsin Madison (2019), are,

A tool to help educators support language development in multilingual learners. WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards represent the social, instructional and academic language students use to engage with peers, educators and the curriculum in schools. The Standards highlight the language needed to meet academic expectations as described by state, college and career readiness standards, and other content standards such as Next Generation Science Standards.

Teachers aimed at assisting students in becoming academically conversant in reading, writing, listening and speaking at grade level in the classroom and with peers.

Six teachers (A, E, F, G, K, and M) advocated for instruction of more advanced learners because communication takes place on a higher level. Teacher G bluntly stated, "I will take a moody eighth-grader over a kindergartner." Teacher M, a college instructor, reflected that at one time, she did have a "true beginner" as a student. After that experience, she explained, "I think I do prefer some skills. Intermediate in reading and things to work with (like) a vocabulary." Teacher C stated, "I also work with the students who are close to being at the same level with their peers, and I have fun with those too." Teacher K described the higher-level learners as "more fluent and you're able to discuss more abstract topics." Teacher F cited an example about employing critical thinking skills when engaged in a discussion on patriotism. Students at this level were able to express their thoughts at a higher level. He went on to say, "Level IV, we're always really transitioning kids until, like, you got to be ready for real life here. And it's a very enjoyable hour every day." Whether it was a beginner or intermediate learner, teachers expressed enthusiasm for assisting learners in attaining proficiency in the language.

Instruments

The interview had two essential parts. The first 11 questions labeled Background

Questions, found in Appendix A, made inquiries regarding key information about the

respondent's background. Readers will find this information in the *Participants* section of this

paper. In the second part of the interview, Appendix B, the researcher asked open-ended

questions that sought to exact information that would answer the two research questions. Q1-Q4

lay the foundation for what teachers believe about offering corrective feedback and Q5-Q12

specifically inquired how teachers implement feedback and how that feedback impacts future

writing tasks. The questionnaire, patterned after Spradley's (1979) guidelines, sought to elicit

information by asking a variety of question types. Descriptive questions (Q5, 6, 7, and 8), as

outlined by Spradley (1979), sought to elicit examples through stories on how teachers assess

written tasks (p.88). Structure questions (Q1, 3, 4, 9 and 10), according to Spradley (1979),

sought to determine how teachers lay the foundation for developing good writers and what other

types of feedback they used in assessment (p. 129). Contrasting questions (Spradley, 1979) (Q2

and 11) asked teachers to compare and contrast native writers with non-native writers and

whether they believed in offering feedback (p.161). Finally, Q12 represented a rating question

(Spradley, 1979) that sought to determine what type of feedback teachers believe improves

writing (p. 170).

Procedure

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began contacting

ESL teachers via email. Names were collected from school websites and initial contact was made

electronically. Upon receiving a response from an instructor, time and meeting place of their

preference was agreed upon. Eight interviews took place at the school where each person

worked; one occurred at a noisy coffee shop and the final one at the teacher's residence. A copy

of the interview questions and a consent form were emailed to the prospective informant prior to

each meeting. The researcher arrived at each site promptly in order to facilitate necessary check-

in procedures when the interview took place during school hours. Seven interviews occurred

after school hours and three took place during the teacher's preparation time. Participants

received an explanation regarding the interview process, were asked to sign the consent form and

for permission to audio record the interview for future reference. After explaining the procedure

and the expectation of both the researcher and the teacher, interviews began promptly.

The first four interviews were recorded using Voice Memos (Apple, Inc., 2016-2018), an

iOS smartphone application that solely recorded the conversation, while the last eight interviews

were recorded using Otter (Liang, Fu, Lau, & McAteer, 2019), a smartphone application that not

only recorded oral interactions, but it also transcribed vocal input into written text. In retrospect,

the researcher should have used the same method of recording for all of the interviews. This

discrepancy has been noted as a limitation. Each recording was repeatedly listened to ensure the

accuracy of the written transcript. Subsequent to the interviews, a transcription of the interaction

was mailed to each participant. To accurately report what teachers believe about corrective

feedback, the researcher asked clarification questions during the interviews and also asked

respondents to elucidate unclear concepts or ideas upon mailing the transcript to each participant.

The transcription files remain stored on a password-protected computer.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively. A series of thirteen questions designed by the researcher sought to glean information about the kind of feedback ESL teachers believe aids second language learners. In an effort to protect the informant's privacy, data were coded by assigning a letter to each one, Teacher A, Teacher B…through Teacher M. The letter "I" was omitted because it could easily be misunderstood as the pronoun "I" and letters J and L represent the two teachers whose data was not included in this study. Q1-4 served to gain background information regarding how teachers set the stage to encourage ESL students to express themselves in written form; Q5-9, 12 and 13 focused on answering research question 1; while Q10 and 11 centered on answering research question 2. When asked, participants related stories of actual classroom happenings in their responses. Examples used in this research protected the privacy of teachers and students by not disclosing names or locations of reported occurrences. The analysis was solely based upon data recorded in the transcripts and clarification responses that were returned. In analyzing data, the researcher examined each question individually and juxtaposed teacher responses from the same education level and different education levels of teaching ESL.

Teacher's responses were tallied to discover significant, recurring terms. Repeated words or phrases across these levels directed attention towards a theme which was subsequently analyzed and compared. In Q12 data were tallied in Table 2 regarding teacher responses to which type of feedback they believe results in the greatest amount of learning. Tables were not deemed as necessary for the other questions. The final question, Q13, asked informants if there was anything else they wanted to say about corrective feedback. Three of the ten teachers had no

more information to share. The other seven teachers reiterated what they felt were the essential

aspects of corrective feedback, which were summed up in final statements.

Chapter 6: Results

The following section will describe for the reader the type of feedback these ten teachers incorporated into classroom practice as a means for strengthening writing tasks. Data from interview questions 5-9, 12, and13 has been used to answer RQ1 about which method(s) of corrective feedback teachers believe strengthens second language writing tasks. Throughout this research, teachers reported using direct feedback, indirect feedback or a combination of direct and indirect feedback when evaluating written tasks. They articulated specific methods of feedback depending on student's age and competency. Overall, teachers expressed that they made a great effort in getting to know their students as they did not hail from homogenous backgrounds. They emphasized the importance of articulating a specific goal for each writing task that focused on developing a specific skill and making sure that students have a clear understanding of the necessary expectations. They also stressed the importance of modeling good writing for students.

Responses to RQ2 regarding whether teachers report that students incorporate corrective feedback in future writing tasks will be found in questions 10 and 11. Teacher F described that the arduous task of crafting concise feedback that aids writers and watching them walk out the door and throw graded assignment into the recycle bin, led him to incorporate techniques like rewriting to improve a grade. Teacher M implemented the completion of a feedback reflection as an aid in student uptake. Individual conferencing with students has the potential to produce the greatest amount of student uptake, Teachers C, K and M expressed the challenge of time constraints to carry out this task.

Question 1: What kind of training have you received in regards to giving feedback on ESL writing tasks? How has that training influenced your feedback strategy?

Nine of the 10 informants reported having had formal ESL training. Teacher F mentioned receiving intentional reading training in his master's study, but writing training had come through observation in an ESL room or by trial/error. Teachers also had received specific training through staff development days or had participated in webinars geared towards ESL instruction. Teacher M had a background in teaching English Literature, but as an ESL instructor, she based her teaching on what college writing teachers expected. Teacher E emphasized, "The kind of feedback you give on writing is completely driven by what your instructional goal is." Both she and Teacher M discussed the importance of training learners to engage metacognitive processing where they see themselves both as readers and as writers. This practice increases awareness of what they are doing and why. Teachers also discussed implementing feedback training in classroom practice. Regarding bilingual language assessment, Teacher B stressed the importance of looking at learner's strengths like "an asset space rather than (focusing on) the deficits." Another idea, as proposed by Teacher D, discussed "making the feedback specific, as immediate as possible, so students learn from it right away and they know exactly what they need to do to correct it and make their work better."

Question 2: Compare and contrast differences between native writers and ESL writers.

All the respondents agreed that native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) have similar and different writing problems. NS have more vocabulary and confidence and they write like they talk which is not in academic English with poor grammar, too many colloquial collocations and a low percentage of academic words. NNS also struggle with grammar, word endings and sentence structure. When NNS write like a book, it works; while when they talk like a book, it appears awkward. Teachers E, F, and H observed that writing for the NNS takes considerable time and energy as everything takes place at a conscious level. Furthermore,

Teacher H continued by saying that the process NNS go through is so different from NS because NNS find themselves constantly translating words and phrases from their "heart language" into written English. Teacher K reported, "Native writers can engage a lot more collocations and basic expressions fluently in their writing." NNS are, as described by Teacher M, 'eye learners,' which means they have often studied English as a foreign language for years—in textbooks, which yields the 'eye learning' emphasis on the academic skills of reading and writing rather than listening and speaking. She contrasted 'eye learners with NS who are 'ear learners that have intuitive grammar and can hear when an error occurs in a sentence.

Teacher E described an obstacle she faced with instructing young teen NNS who were learning to write. Some students from her classroom had not had an opportunity to attend school due to political unrest in their country of origin. Since these students had no literacy training, she faced the challenge of teaching fundamental writing skills to secondary students without insulting or boring them. Teacher C reported that accurately integrating new vocabulary into compositions may or may not effectively improve writing, especially when the vocabulary word is misused. For example, one of her EL students wrote: "*I am vigor."* She told the student that vigor "is not something you are; it's a feeling you have. *I am full of vigor today."* She went to say that students need to be trained on how to use the word correctly besides mimicking examples discussed in class.

Not only do NNS encounter challenges with fluency and creativity, but according to Teacher H, they also struggle with grammar and sentence structure. One-half of the informants noted common grammatical inconsistencies like subject-verb agreement, incomplete word endings like *ing, ed, or s,* improper usage of articles or pronouns, verb tense, and, scrambling word order as composition challenges NNS face. Depending on the level of learning, as

expressed by Teacher F, ESL writers know in their heads what they want to write, but do not have the vocabulary in English to articulate their ideas on paper. Teacher M mentioned that many older teen and adult EL learners entertain a myriad of roles outside of school like raising children, working full-time jobs, caring for elderly parents, maintaining a household, and so forth, so studying English takes a secondary role in their lives.

Furthermore, according to nine informants, NS have more information to write about because they have a more extensive vocabulary. NS errors appear in the improper insertion or exclusion of punctuation marks, spelling errors or repeating the same sentence structure. Informants described NS as having an ear for recognizing collocations that fluently contribute creativity to written tasks. Both NS and NNS, according to Teacher M, have deficits or challenges with academic language. She continued, "For the NS, it's that they have not been exposed to academic language and reading academic texts…and then our NNS struggle with vocabulary like collocations and field-specific vocabulary." Teacher E agreed that NS have an innate understanding that aids in putting thoughts on paper, but face the challenge of incorporating academic language. Interestingly, as mentioned by Teachers A, F, and G, second language learners must complete the Access test, a standardized measure of language competency based on WIDA standards in K12 classrooms in Minnesota. This test assesses a student's fluency in academic English. As students reach the competency level of their classmates, they are able to exit the ESL program and attend mainstream classes. Unlike the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) proctored in Minnesota schools, the Access test includes a writing component.

Question 3: Could you describe what kind of assignment (Intersentential, dialogue journal, or essay) you might give as a first writing assignment for an intermediate ESL Class?

Teachers reported that a first writing assignment usually included writing about something they had words for and could describe, something familiar within their background knowledge: Ramadan and not Thanksgiving for Somali students. To avoid assigning a written task as busywork, teachers built the requirements, even for a first assignment, on authentic tasks students would encounter when taking the Access Test. Teacher A talked about assigning "authentic tasks" students would see again, like comparison and contrast. Teacher B displayed a picture of a scene with emotion so students could "visualize real situations" and begin to express their feelings with words. Using the scaffolding method, Teacher C would brainstorm a topic with learners and describe for them how to write the beginning, middle and end of a story. Vocabulary words associated with the topic would be written on a whiteboard or word wall. After working together, students would write individually using their language and their ideas. Teacher D favored the use of dialogue journals where students could free write or compose ideas from a writing prompt. Teacher E alternated between free writing and formal writing. She assigned free writing tasks to stimulate the flow of ideas. Teacher E continued,

> We start out with volume, grading on volume just to get them unstuck. And then
> the starting essays from there are always personal essays because that's what they
> know. And they have already got a whole collection of free writes, they can go
> back and just pick something and turn it into an essay.

Teacher F stressed the importance of writing every day in class, but a first assignment focused on something familiar, something students had words to describe. Teacher G gave students a prompt, "What is your one wish for the school year?" and a sentence frame for starters, "One wish I have for the school year is …" Teacher H adopted a curriculum that focused on structure and style. She led the students in dissecting each sentence of a pre-written paragraph (from an

Encyclopedia or another source) into three keywords per sentence as an outline. Students then rewrote the paragraph using the outline and their own words. Teacher K tasked students with introducing themselves. Finally, Teacher M asked lower-level students to write a descriptive essay about themselves with a focus on past tense and direct or indirect speech as grammar features. Higher-level classes wrote about their names and what their names meant. Each of these examples points to the term familiar or something learners had words to describe.

Question 4: Tell me a story of how you prepare writing classes before assigning graded work, i.e., Building atmosphere and safe spaces.

Due to the personal nature of writing, respondents agreed on the importance of building a safe environment of trust and mutual respect as a breeding ground for good writers. Teacher A integrated scaffolded learning into her classes. She recounted a story on how she equipped students with vocabulary about a given topic by reading books dedicated to that subject and choosing vocabulary from the books to add to the word wall. She modeled good writing. As a group, they created sentences together about a specific topic using the word wall and finally, she assigned students to construct their own sentences integrating the new vocabulary. Teacher B, from a dual language classroom, described how she used dictation every day. She said, "Every day it's the same. So, we're practicing just where periods go, where capital letters go. In Spanish, where accents go, where the tildes go and all that stuff. So that's kind of a foundational piece of the writing." She stressed practicing penmanship more than composition.

In response to the personal nature of writing, Teacher E added, "Writing is intimate." Teacher M concurred by stating, "Writing is vulnerable." Because of the risks of exposing inner thoughts and feelings in writing, teachers expressed the need to "create a positive environment" (Teacher A), "build community" (Teacher E), and "build rapport" (Teacher K). Teacher C stated,

"I do not allow them to tease each other." Instead Teachers F and H endeavored to create an atmosphere of respect despite cultural differences. By equipping students with the necessary tools—vocabulary and grammar—for composition Teachers A, C, G, H, K, and M aspired to achieve this 'safe environment'. Whether students shared orally first (Teachers G and H) or observed as teachers gave examples of good/bad writing (Teachers B, D, H, and K), learners came to know that the ESL room was a safe place to express themselves, even if they made mistakes.

Teachers A and K suggested offering writing prompts or sentence starters as initiation points for students to germinate ideas for a written task. Teacher G stated, "Building a safe place is key for ELs because they need to take risks with language and especially at the Middle School, that is not always safe." Teachers E, F, and M suggested occasional small group or cooperative work. Teacher M tried to dissolve cultural barriers by challenging small groups of four students to find similarities amongst the participants.

Instructors incorporated scaffolding by modeling good writing and applying the "I do, we do, you do" strategy as outlined by Teacher M. An example of good writing was written or projected before the class and discussed providing reading and writing connection (I do) modeling the directions. Together, as a class, they created their own example by following the instructor's example (we do). Finally, students creatively fashioned their own writing using the information they had discussed (you do). This method supports scaffolded learning as students who encounter a safe, nurturing environment gain independence and motivation for a successful composition.

Question 5: Could you tell me a story of how you would assess each type of writing task (intersentential, dialogue journal, or essay) in regards to the types of feedback (direct or indirect) you would offer?

When analyzing responses to this question, teachers differentiated between assessing free writing, namely, dialogue journals where students wrote for fluency and formal writing where students fulfilled specific criterion for an essay. They related stories of how they assess students for these two types of writing. Six teachers (A, D, E, G, H, and M) reported using direct feedback and four teachers (B, C, F, and K) reported incorporating a combination of direct and indirect feedback when assessing writing.

Freewriting, according to primary and secondary teachers, had the goal of developing fluency in English. Post-secondary teachers only discussed formal writing tasks. Teacher B reported that when she assessed dialogue journals, she did not correct errors; instead, she modeled what good writing looks like in her responses to the student. Teacher D also reported that she did not assess dialogue journals as they were a means for her to gather information. In like manner, Teachers E and G used Google Docs as a means of sharing journal entries with students. They offered comments on the content of the journal, but based the grade on word count and whether the student wrote for the allotted time. Teacher G mentioned that when she assessed dialogue journals, she would choose 1-2 repeated patterns of errors and draw the student's attention to correcting only those errors. Due to a large amount of a teacher's time needed to carry out this practice, Teacher G reported that dialogue journals worked best with fewer students in a class.

In contrast to free writing for fluency, formal writing included the use of a rubric as either a checklist or as a guide for what teachers expected students to accomplish in that particular task.

When assessing formal writing, Teacher E stated that she used a rubric so students "know exactly what she is looking for and they know exactly what they are revising for." She graded the first draft primarily on getting it done on time. The essay's content was graded separately from the editing. Teacher D incorporated the use of a rubric to assess content, spelling, or punctuation and to determine whether each part of the essay—beginning, middle and end—was present.

From another perspective, Teacher M actively implemented the use of portfolios in her lower-level writing classes. The portfolios, a visual tool, contained information about the student's background—literacy training, how many languages they spoke and all their work from that class. Students were graded on the process of writing. She used a rubric as a checklist and stated, "In order to earn a C, you must do this, in order to earn a B…, in order to earn an A…" She continued, "As far as grammar, we are usually focusing on a certain feature of grammar, so the first assignment is going to be sentence boundaries and the number of noun/verb pairs within those boundaries." By the end of the semester in a one-on-one conference with this professor, learners were able to go back and look through their portfolios and track their top three errors. During the conference, she assisted them in devising strategies for alleviating these inconsistencies as they progressed on to higher-level academic writing classes.

Direct feedback, according to Teacher A, should be positive. She recounted that she only offered feedback on a specific skill that students had been working on during class. For example, she would look for *ed* endings or the number of vocabulary words used in the essay. Teacher H, from the secondary level, remarked that she was still making up her mind on how specific to be on giving grammar feedback. With the method of teaching she was currently using, students dissected each paragraph into sentences and each sentence into three keywords. Students received a 100% if they talked about every sentence in the paragraph, "even if (their) grammar

was abysmal." From this base, she added requirements such as including different parts of speech. The list of requirements grew throughout the semester until students were able to competently compose an academic writing piece.

The last type of feedback described by teachers combined direct and indirect feedback. In doing this, teachers believed they were equipping students to become better writers. Teacher B stressed the importance of modeling and teaching a revision strategy, so students could reach independence in writing. Teacher C expressed concern regarding whether the feedback hindered or helped learners in language acquisition. She stated, "There are some kids, if you critique things, they will get really upset and they will just shut down." She said that she took the time to get to know her students and tried to read how they would respond to feedback. She geared her feedback towards the student and the instructional goal. Teacher C said, "It's my job to take your good writing and make it great!" Along those lines, Teacher F only offered feedback according to what he was looking for. If they were working on a writing prompt that was tied directly with grammar, then he would give feedback on the essay accordingly. He strove to put the responsibility on learner's shoulders by showing them a problem with their paper, saying, "Here's an issue, can you explain to me why it is an issue." He went on to say that each essay needed to have a clear purpose. If he was looking for a critical thinking response, he was not going to dissect their grammar.

In like manner, Teacher K offered different kinds of feedback at different points of the writing process. During the brainstorming section, he conferred with learners about their ideas. Students were able to verbalize to him what they wanted to write about but would have almost nothing written on the paper. He knew the information was in their heads, so he would ask questions to get students to realize they already have all the information they need. This type of

feedback is considered indirect because he did not offer a good or bad judgment on their topic, instead he tried to draw out the ideas they already had. During the outlining process, he gave general feedback on the organization of ideas, but no vocabulary or grammar feedback. Direct feedback would come on the first draft where he focused on content and organization. From there, he went on to look at major vocabulary and grammar errors. By focusing on two to three main patterns of errors, he limited his direct feedback and saved students from getting lost in the red markings.

Depending on the goal of the writing task, teachers reported varying their feedback strategies. This could be due to the fact that the goal of freewriting was to develop fluency, whereas the goal of formal writing was to develop academic writing skills. Per the scaffolding model, teachers strove to model good writing and push students towards independence by purposefully composing positive feedback that had the potential to propel students to the next level of academic writing.

Question 6: Can you tell me a story of how you assessed grammatical errors using direct feedback that identifies the location and type of error in an intersentential task? Dialogue journal? Essay?

In answering this question, teachers disclosed creative ways of offering direct feedback, but their responses did not always directly address all the details of the question. They offered direct feedback by color-coding their responses, engaging learners in a game that aided in discovering grammatical inconsistencies, asking students to orally read what they have written, individually conferencing with a student or using a sentence-pattering chart that offered variety in word or phrase choices.

Teachers offered direct feedback couched in positive terms that encouraged learners to continue developing as a writer. Teacher M reported that she read through graded essays three times, offering different, color-coded feedback each time. Teacher M stated,

> The first time I collect essays, I read all of them through once. I might do some
>
> formatting, like indent paragraphs, double space, I might comment on formatting,
>
> but I really try to do no commenting on that first read…The second time, I read
>
> for content and that's when I write in pencil. I make comments about the ideas,
>
> how they are organized and all that kind of stuff. The third time, I read for
>
> grammar and so that comes in red.

Teacher A explained that her direct feedback included reading the assignment aloud to the class, whether the grammar was correct or incorrect. In this way, she tried "to get them to have an ear for it by reminding them of what we have learned." For younger learners, according to Teacher D, when she noticed the overuse of a particular verb or not enough adjectives or prepositional phrases, she directed writers to a sentence-patterning chart that offered word or phrase options to include in their work. In older grades, as described by Teacher F, sentence-patterning charts would portray color-coded parts of speech as a model for students to follow along with ideas for structuring sentences that added variety to the commonly overused S-V-O pattern. With the help of these tools, students had a visual representation from which to compose more complex written tasks.

Teacher E described her feedback as involving a student's classmates. She said that she encouraged peer feedback groups to critique each other's essays. She compiled a list of questions and tasked peer groups with discovering, "What is interesting? What is the strong idea? Tell me more about this…" Teacher B related a story of a student who wrote *braken* as the past tense

form of *brake*. This error provided her an opportunity to introduce irregular verb endings with this individual.

Some examples given as direct feedback were indirect feedback, so the researcher has grouped those responses in the following paragraph. Teacher B incorporated a game called *"My Favorite Gnome."* In this game, sentences are projected onto a screen or whiteboard. Some sentences had errors, others did not. Students were given the responsibility of locating and correcting any errors found in the sentence. She found this tool very helpful in encouraging active learning with her ELL's. Teacher A supported the practice of reading a portion or all of an essay aloud to the class with no name attached and allowed the class to offer verbal feedback on collocations as they developed an ear for correct and incorrect grammar. Teacher G also suggested that reading something grammatically correct in conjunction with something incorrect aided students at finding inconsistencies.

Question 7: Can you tell me a story of how you assessed grammatical errors using indirect feedback that identifies the location and type of error in an intersentential task? Dialogue journal? Essay?

Teachers offered similar answers to Q6 for indirectly assessing writing tasks. They reported that integrating indirect feedback strategies such as reading aloud, drawing a connection between oral and written language and developing critical thinking skills encouraged student autonomy. In the same manner that Q6 had inconsistencies regarding direct or indirect feedback, some examples given in Q7 were actually direct feedback. Readers will also note that some of the assessment methods repeat what was reported in the previous question.

Teachers A and E discussed the practice of projecting student sentences, no name attached, onto a screen where the class would edit the sentences together. Teacher A believed

this practice connected written language with spoken. She related a story about a student saying, *"She reads the book."* When she compared what the student said with what they wrote, "*She read book*," she noted an inconsistency. At that point Teacher A was able to tell her students that written language should reflect spoken language. Projecting a classmate's work onto a screen also, according to Teacher E, "emboldens" students as they see their classmates making the same types of errors. Similarly, Teachers D and H described that they would read an essay aloud and ask for class participation in editing. Reading aloud, according to Teacher H, has the propensity to inspire students to improve their writing skills because they hear a classmate's longer or more definitive work. She reiterated the importance of couching correction with encouragement.

Teacher B color-coded parts of speech on a sentence-patterning chart and occasionally asked students to do the same in their notebooks. Teacher C stressed the importance of guiding students towards independence because all ESL learners take the Access test. During the test teachers will not be able to assist students in any way, so they need to have attained a measure of independence.

Teacher H praised a Chinese student for her ability in writing but asked her to write in the past tense for the next draft because the Chinese language does not have past tense verbs. Consequently, this student needed to figure out on her own, how to incorporate past tense verbs into her essay. Teacher K offered indirect feedback on first drafts hinting at errors, but his feedback became more specific each time an essay crossed his desk. He did not circle every error, only major patterns of errors. Teacher M noted that as learners develop writing skills, assessing errors directly or indirectly was useful only when ideas were organized and clear. If she saw a paragraph that did not fit, she told students that she would not assess the grammar. But she would help them with the content, before zeroing in on grammatical inconsistencies.

Some examples given as indirect feedback were actually direct feedback, so the researcher has grouped those responses in the following paragraph. Comparison was also used as a means of assessing. In this form of assessment, native language sentence structure was compared to the English sentence structure. For example, Teacher G noted that native Spanish speakers found it appropriate to use a double negative. She recounted examples when she would say, "In Spanish, they use two negatives, but in English, we use one." Teacher M acknowledged that she sometimes added articles and prepositions without counting them as errors in lower-level classes because these parts of speech are, as Teacher M explained, "non-systematic or idiomatic." Teachers expressed a common goal of guiding students toward independent composition and employed various methods of scaffolded learning to reach that goal.

Question 8: Do you believe future ESL writing improves as a result of corrective feedback? If so, please tell me a story about a type of feedback you believe has helped improve writing.

Seven instructors expressed that they believe that corrective feedback improves future writing tasks, Teacher A used the term "definitely" in her response. Two teachers C and E agreed but to a lesser degree. Teacher C used the phrase, "In general.*"* Teacher E said, "Corrective feedback done wrong can destroy a writer's confidence." Teacher M was not sure due to the lack of personal research supporting such a conclusion.

In support of corrective feedback, Teacher A stated, "All writers, any writers need feedback to get to be a better writer. …you need someone to guide you and show you what you are doing right and how to improve it." Teacher F recited the process he has implemented in his class. After students submit an essay, he will offer feedback and return it to them. Then they go back into the lab and fix the marked errors. Students may consult with pod partners or ask him if

they have questions. By not holding students accountable for fixing the errors, the work—student's work and teacher's laborious feedback—would end up in the recycling bin and that assignment would not be considered a "learning experience," only an activity to fill time. Teacher B referred to a student's "native language" as a point of reference by contrasting that language with English. "In Spanish you say, …, but in English we say, …" Also, in support of corrective feedback, Teacher G stated, "They want to know. They are eager to learn." Teacher K described the difference between students who only care about their grade with those who "took it to the next level" by incorporating information gleaned from the current essay into the next essay. He related a story of a Nepalese student who became "the best writer in the class due to his ability to integrate feedback from current writing tasks into successive tasks."

Respondents who supported corrective feedback but less emphatically, reported the following about the role of feedback in improving writing; Teacher C expressed concern regarding how individual students handle feedback. She stated, "Sometimes kids just need time developmentally to get to the kind of writing they are supposed to do." Likewise, Teacher E stated, "A student, a writer cannot feel powerless, cannot feel like they are playing a guessing game on how do I get this right. Or why did I get this wrong? They need to know exactly, upfront what is required." She went on to delineate the difference between feedback and grading. Learners in her classes receive a lot of feedback before receiving a formal grade. In this manner, her feedback worked as an asset towards the overall goal.

Teacher M described learners who would come back to her room after finishing her class to say that what she had taught them was very helpful. Student testimony, while subjective in nature, supported the benefits of corrective feedback.

Five of the 10 teachers mentioned that raising learner's awareness resulted in improved writing. Teacher A described EL "writing as never wrong, it just can be better." Teacher M stated, "When a learner thinks about what they are learning, they learn better; they learn more." Teacher H supported encouraging metacognitive awareness with an example of a Vietnamese student whose writing was so "convoluted and twisted" because she was translating everything from Vietnamese into English. After working with Teacher H and fixing every single error, this student's essays improved to the point where she was almost at the same writing level as her classmates. When instructors fine-tuned feedback to only one or two errors, it offered intentional instruction regarding the targeted weakness(es).

As a rule, teachers agree that corrective feedback aids EL learners in writing. They related stories that supported this view. Teachers make feedback intentional and targeted at specific weaknesses so students will be able to remember the next time they write. I believe Teacher K summed it up by saying, "What it comes down to is the metacognitive awareness, being able to analyze what are my weaknesses and what do I need to work on right now."

Question 9: In question 8 you mentioned that you have used _____ (type) of feedback with ESL students, tell me a story about using other methods.

In conjunction with the methods of feedback mentioned above, teachers also built confidence in new writers through comparison, freewriting, peer and/or parent editing, and a focus group intervention. Ideas teachers expressed may have already been mentioned in this research, but for each one, it represented a type of feedback the teacher being interviewed typically did not exercise in their classrooms.

Teachers A, H, K, and M strove to build confidence in their student's writing ability by letting them see how much progress they had attained from the beginning of the semester/year.

They saved projects from early in the year to compare with a current task. This acted as an encouragement for students as they visually saw the improvements in their writing. Teacher A described first and second graders as engaging in *experiential writing* by using inventive spelling. She compared that with the *technical writing* one finds in grades 4-6 that represents tasks with correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. Teacher H encouraged her students by reading their essays out loud. In this way, she was able to smooth over grammar mistakes and add voice inflections. She went on to explain that students could not believe they had written something that sounded so good. From this exercise, a learner's confidence was built as they began to see, according to Teacher H, "my writing is meant to communicate to other people."

Teachers E and G discussed the practice of freewriting. Free writing for Teacher E took place in a dialogue journal where she wrote back and forth with each student on a Chromebook. She explained that constructive feedback should not be "attached to risk," She phrased her feedback in this way "Here is my idea…" or "Here, as a reader, I got confused here, I need you to make a bridge from this idea to this idea because you lost me." She would also say, "This left me wanting to know more… What was the situation here?" She believed that this was considered useful feedback because there was no risk attached. Teacher G implemented "Free Write Friday" into her lesson plans. At the beginning of the year, she set a timer for 2 minutes and everyone wrote/typed on their Chromebooks for 2 minutes. The time gradually increased to 5 minutes because students remarked that they still had more to write. After time expired, everyone stopped and took 2 minutes to edit to their writing. Afterward, she projected her writing on the document camera and had learners help her recast or reformulate the sentences. Teacher G would say, "I like this word better here." Or "I missed a comma here." Students were allowed to write in any language they felt comfortable.

Teachers D incorporated peer editing as another method of feedback. She not only included peers in the editing process but also prepared a checklist for learners to take home and have a parent assess their assignment. In this way, Teacher D involved parents in the learning process.

This next type of other feedback represents what students think when receiving graded assignments from the teacher. Teacher M reported how a focus group of faculty and staff from a campus professional development office came to her class to interview her students. The administration excused her from class during the interview. The focus group reported their findings to this teacher. According to Teacher M, the results took an interesting twist as it came to light that she and her students viewed feedback differently. She rationalized the grade with her comments by giving hints for what they could do the next time, but students did not know what to do with her feedback because they felt that the comments on the rubric did not seem connected with grade. Because of these differing perspectives, Teacher M continued, "I decided that this is where I need to start using different colors and then to explain that feedback so that they would understand I am looking at different things each time I read."

Teachers sought to build confidence in EL writers by varying the type of feedback they offered. Whether a teacher produced an early written piece for students to see personal progress, provided opportunities for students to engage in a group writing project where peers edited each other's work, assigned free writing tasks, read student work aloud, or asked clarification questions, they incorporated creative means of offering feedback. This included color-coding feedback, which was believed to aid in increasing understanding of the errors when composing in English.

Question 10: Tell me stories about grading where you had evidence that students had read your feedback and stories where you doubt they had read your feedback. Percentage read?

Teachers responded with stories of students who read and incorporated feedback into current and future writing tasks and stories of students who never bothered to read teacher feedback. Conferencing individually or in small groups was a key component for engaging students in reading feedback. Four teachers F, G, H, and K did not give exact figures but responded in the following manner. Teacher F used the term "most" to describe the percentage of students who read his feedback. The rewriting process he required of his students encouraged them to incorporate his feedback into the assignment to better their grade. Teacher G stated,

If I just handed it back to them and did not walk them through it, probably not a very high percentage. Fortunately, I get to work in a small group, ten students and I can say that we are going to take the time to see what I wrote. And do you agree with me?

In conjunction with Teachers F and G, Teacher H estimated, "Two-thirds or three-fourths read them (feedback), but probably only a half really take it to heart." Likewise, Teacher K explained, "Percentage-wise, it comes down to the class, some classes it seems like everybody does (reads the feedback); some classes it seems like nobody does." Teachers F, G, and H taught at the secondary level, while Teacher K taught post-secondary.

The remaining six teachers assigned percentage points ranging from 30 percent to 100 percent of students who read their feedback. Three of the informants, Teacher A (primary) Teacher E (secondary) and Teacher M (post-secondary), reported that they believe that at least 95 percent of their students read the feedback. Teacher A reported, "They will all see it, one hundred percent, because I am telling it to them." Teacher E remarked that "They always read

it...Writing is so personal." Furthermore, she said, "I have never had a student just totally not care." Teacher M reported that she believed that 95 percent of her students read the feedback because she required them to complete feedback reflections. Before she designed the feedback reflections, she had students write about their experience with an essay. "Randomly and unexpectedly," students would be able to integrate feedback. Now that she uses feedback reflections, she specifically asked, "How did your process change? What did you decide to do differently after your experience with essay one? What changed between those? Sometimes the student will mention, 'You said I should see the tutor.' or 'You explained s/v agreement, so now I understand that better.'"

Teacher B, C, and D, all primary teachers, suggested that fewer students read the feedback. Teacher B stated, "I feel like 30 percent actually care about it and 70 percent do not." She added, "Now when I sit with them and confer with them and they have a deeper understanding, I would say that number jumps to 90 percent (who care) 10 percent (do not care)." Teacher C divided her response into thirds,

> There is the third of the students who are super motivated and listen to what you say and absorb it and spit it back out. And then there is that middle group…they generally are just good students…but they are not super motivated to go above and beyond. But then there is that one third that they are just here because this is where kids go during the day, to school.

Teacher D stated that she does not "write a ton of feedback. I mainly conference with them (second graders) and give oral feedback." She estimated that about seventy percent of her students incorporated her feedback into future writing tasks.

Teachers B, C, D, E, H, K, and M contrasted learners who are motivated to become better writers, with learners who sport an "I do not care attitude" as described by Teacher B, "It is all good. I will try again." Teacher C stated, "I did notice that the top percent who are really motivated to exit (the ESL program) I can tell they have taken what I have said to heart." Teacher B outlined attitude differences by gender. She suggested that female students read feedback more often than male students.

Teacher K explained that only select few students had mastered the technique of "transferring" a skill learned in the current assigned task to the next one. He went on to relate an example of a student who became the best writer in class because he not only incorporated Teacher K's feedback in his current papers, but he also used those new-found skills in future assignments. This student asked native speakers what particular words they would use in a given sentence and he also conducted an interview to find the opposite viewpoint of a topic of which he was writing.

Respondents discussed creative ways of engaging students in becoming better writers. Components that teachers expressed as tools for improving writing tasks included a rewriting process that had the potential to improve a student's grade, completing a feedback reflection that caused students to think about the process of writing and conferencing individually with students or collaborating as a group. Unfortunately, time constraints play a significant role in the amount of conferencing teachers can accomplish.

If one considers Teacher F's response above "most" and Teacher K who could have one class where students read the feedback and the next class where no one reads the feedback, one might begin to question the validity of the arduous task of crafting feedback for EL learners. It

could make Truscott's (1996) claim for offering no feedback on second language writing tasks not seem quite so controversial.

Question 11: Do you believe student writing would improve from receiving no corrective feedback? Why or why not?

The researcher expected that one or two educators would practice offering 'no feedback' in adherence with the notable controversy incited by John Truscott (1996), but found that all ten participants believed in offering feedback on formal writing tasks. One instructor, Teacher E, an advocate of writing for fluency, reported that she offered no feedback on free writing tasks in a dialogue journal. She assessed the task solely on the word number goal.

Teachers had this to say about feedback. "You need feedback to grow; otherwise, you just stay the same" (Teacher A). As a language learner herself (Spanish), Teacher B described how hurt she would have felt to have her whole paper broken apart with red ink, but she found it helpful when instructed on how to improve specific areas. Teacher C reported that by not offering feedback about where to put punctuation or capitalization, students would continue "writing the same way they write anyway, thinking it is correct." Teacher D also noted that language learners might be unaware that they are making errors based on how their friends and family talk or write. She continued, "Without that feedback, no, I do not think it (student writing) would improve." Teacher F compared feedback to parenting by saying, "You do not want to break someone's back, but you also want to guide him or her in writing properly by offering solutions." He continued, "The way we teach is through feedback along the way. To go to the next level, someone needs to guide you." Feedback is a form of learning how not to repeat the same error.

In support of offering feedback, Teacher G stated, "Especially in EL, they keep making the same mistakes and then it cements it in their brain that it must be right. I believe corrective feedback is very beneficial." Teacher H expressed a similar belief, "If I just put a star on everything that students write, I see it getting worse over the year." She went on to say, "There have been times where I have not given feedback on writing and so it just gets sloppier as we go, so I do think there needs to be accountability." If a writing task does not have all the necessary elements as outlined by her checklist, Teacher H will return it to the student for revision as opposed to docking points from the grade. Teacher K concurred by stating, "Some students have learned the language, but they are not really language learners. They have acquired a skill that they need in order to survive in the place; they have not really thought about the language learning process…" Teacher M supported corrective feedback by recommending a book by "her hero", Dana Ferris (2009), *Teaching Writing to Diverse Populations.* Teacher M stated this about the book, "In there she (Ferris) defends the use of corrective feedback and how it is not ethical for us not to give feedback to students." Ergo Teacher M collected student work in a portfolio so they could look back and not only see specific patterns of errors, but also track the progress they have made throughout the past term.

In conjunction with offering no feedback, Teacher K described students who have developed metacognitive skills that help them decipher errors would not need feedback; they only need to figure out which resource to consult to solve the problem. He went on to say that most language learners do not fit in that category.

If the researcher correctly understood what teachers have been saying, they regard feedback as a form of scaffolded learning as they mentor second language writers. Offering guidance throughout the writing process directs students to know exactly what they are aiming

at. The goal was for them to be able to independently compose academic writing. All of the

respondents supported the notion that formal student writing improves as a result of receiving

corrective feedback. By focusing on specific features of grammar inconsistencies helped to

prevent students from feeling overwhelmed at the immensity of the task.

Question 12: Please rate in order of effectiveness which type(s) of feedback you believe

results in the greatest amount of improvement. Why?

Data from Table 2 represents how teachers responded when asked to rate, in order, the

type of feedback they found most useful with language learners. Readers will notice that nine

teachers reported that solely offering indirect feedback was the least effective means of feedback,

while one respondent found it less effective, Teacher G. None of the respondents found it most

effective. Nine teachers rated only offering direct feedback to second language writers as less

effective, while Teacher G rated it most effective. Nine teachers rated offering a combination of

direct and indirect feedback as most effective, while Teacher G rated it least effective. Readers

will observe that the data supported the opinion that most teachers believed that offering a

combination of direct and indirect feedback yielded the most learner uptake in writing.

Table 2

Feedback Reported as Most Effective

	Most Effective	Less Effective	Least Effective
Indirect	0	1	9
Direct	1	9	0
Combination	9	0	1

Combination feedback targeted the writing task as a whole. In support of combination

feedback, Teacher E stressed that learners "write for an audience," and feedback should be

"appropriate to the needs and goals of the assignment." In the same vein, Teacher G mentioned

the challenge of teaching basic skills age appropriately. She stated, "I know the NS might not need the consonant-vowel-consonant words with /e/ at the end. They might not need that, but my EL kids might." Teacher M stated, "Writers have to control their product." She continued, "A good skill of a writer is to be reader aware and to know what your readers need." As Teacher M formulated her feedback, she delineated which set of eyes she was using, "As a reader…; as a teacher …". Teacher C emphasized that feedback should be "personalized" to what each student needs.

Teachers B and D used the term "balance" when referencing combination feedback. Direct feedback depicts how a learner can proceed in the editing process, while indirect feedback helps learners build metacognitive awareness for discovering errors for themselves. Since different types of learners comprise each classroom, as described by Teacher A, some learners need direct instruction, right to the point, while others understand right away what corrections would make their assignment better. Direct instruction should be "clear," according to Teacher B, to promote effective learning. Teacher G added that since reading and writing work together to build language, feedback should also be "purposeful." Teacher F noted that indirect feedback is difficult to decipher.

Teacher K expressed the importance of understanding a student's cultural heritage as a critical ingredient for offering feedback. He added that as teachers, we need to be "gentle" with the type of feedback we offer. In response to culture, Teacher K stated,

Whereas for some students, especially from East Asia, if you give them too direct of feedback it can really discourage them. Because in those cultures, Japanese and Korean cultures, it is more read between the lines…Whereas some of the students from Africa and the Middle East, you can be a lot more direct with them and they

expect that...If you are not direct enough, then they do not feel like they have

gotten anything out of it.

Understanding a student's culture can aid teachers in knowing when and how to offer corrective

feedback.

Overall, teachers rated combination feedback as the most effective means of improving

writing. They stressed the importance of understanding the student's cultural heritage. They also

stressed the importance of "gentle" (Teacher K), "purposeful" (Teacher G) and "balanced"

(Teachers A and D) feedback.

Question 13: Is there anything else I should know about corrective feedback?

Seven of the educators reiterated what they felt as the most important aspects of the

interview, as recorded in the following paragraphs. Teachers D, F and H had no more

information to share at this time.

Five participants, Teachers C, G, K and M expressed the importance of getting to know

their students. Because EL writing classes do not consist of a homogenous group, understanding

a learner's home life and cultural background aids in building a relationship with them, as

reported by both Teachers C and M. Teacher M accomplished this task by requiring each learner

to complete a language biography. In this biography she asked, "What do you read? What do you

write? How many languages do you speak? Are you literate? What things are difficult? What

things do you find easy?" She kept this biography in the learner's portfolio for referencing

throughout the semester. Along with relationship building, Teacher G reiterated that EL students

need a safe environment where they can make mistakes. She helped students to write in a way

that makes them sound like a NS. Teacher K tried to figure out what type of feedback would

open the door (point of entry) of learner's minds. He strove to find a balance between

understanding the individual and not crushing their motivation. Teachers expressed the importance of knowing and understanding your students as a critical ingredient for teaching effectively.

The second topic teachers addressed in regard to anything else I needed to know about corrective feedback related to making feedback with written and oral language "purposeful" (Teacher G) in a safe environment. Teacher A reiterated that learners need feedback to grow, and it is essential to take a positive approach when offering feedback. "Writing tasks must be relevant and meaningful," as expressed by Teacher E, "Derived from the learning objective." She continued, "Language is power, because they have experienced a lack of language and lack of power." According to Teacher B, EL learners begin to connect reading and writing as they see it modeled for them. Furthermore, learners desired to communicate effectively, according to Teacher E, and present a positive face to their peers. Therefore, writing has to be a low risk where students had the freedom to experiment and play with the language. Teachers believed in the importance of knowing their students and making writing tasks purposeful as students experiment with language.

In summary, data gathered from this ethnographic study denoted that teachers incorporated feedback into formal writing tasks because they believe that they are helping students become better writers. They strive to make writing tasks purposeful, aimed towards a specific goal. All ten instructors reported that they hone their feedback to "focus on a feature" (Teacher M). They offered feedback through a combination of means—direct feedback and indirect feedback to increase learner uptake. Two teachers had designed and implemented a rewriting process to ensure that students read the feedback. They stressed the importance of making sure students knew exactly what was expected of them for each assignment.

Chapter 7: Discussion

The discussion portion of the paper has sought to answer the research questions in conjunction with teacher responses regarding feedback. Participants in this study have all received specific training as ESL teachers by completing university degrees, webinars, and/or staff development workshops. Each one expressed a passion for seeing second language students assimilate into the language and culture of America. They compared and contrasted native writers with non-native writers who both struggle with academic writing skills. NS write more fluently and creatively, while NNS write like a book, even though they struggle with word order, tense and subject/verb agreement. When comparing and contrasting a NS writing task with a NNS, Hung, and Young (2015) stated, "Students face additional difficulties for academic writing largely due to their level of language competency" (p. 250). This idea was supported by participant responses to Q2 of the Interview Questions, who noted that NS are generally more creative than their NNS counterparts. NS have more to say because they are more familiar with the language. Teacher K repeatedly remarked that NNS already have the information in their heads; they struggle to find English words to express these thoughts and ideas. NS can be described as 'ear learners' who know grammar intuitively, while NNS are 'eye learners' who have learned English from a textbook. Because of this learning method, they consciously undergo the arduous task of translating words from their "heart language" (Teacher H), into English.

Teachers stressed the importance of making their classroom a safe space where students could gain confidence in their writing ability. Creating and maintaining a positive environment provided ESL students with the freedom to practice with language without fear of ridicule when they made a mistake. When an EL student participates in a mainstream classroom, the fear of

mispronouncing a word in front of peers often prohibits them from speaking up, even if they know the correct answer. Learners were said to thrive in the ESL classroom where they encountered other English learners in smaller numbers.

Teachers reported that a first writing assignment usually tasked students with writing about something familiar, something they had the words to describe. This included writing a narrative essay or personal experience. Clear expectations regarding types of required grammatical features and word count were explained.

RQ1: Which method(s) of corrective feedback teachers believe strengthens second language writing tasks?

In answering RQ1, one first needs to discover whether teachers believe corrective feedback is beneficial (Q8)? Responses to Q8 supported the practice of offering feedback, with conditions. Teacher D stated, "It helps, but you have to be careful with it so that you are not correcting every single thing…and they feel a sense of defeat." Teacher F said, "It is helpful if you have to do something with it." Teacher K added, "I believe it does help improve writing for those students who are interested in improving their writing." Nine out of ten respondents agreed that offering a combination of direct and indirect feedback benefitted students, but they expressed caution regarding its use.

Teachers and students have similar expectations regarding feedback. Teachers expected to offer feedback and students expected to receive it. Ferris (1999) endorsed the practice of corrective feedback because it alerted students to content, structural or grammatical errors. Teachers believed feedback should be immediate and specific, so students learned right away (Hartshorn et al., 2010). From another perspective, Stary (2010) reported that even though students say they will revise the assignment, they often do not follow through with the revision.

She discovered that students often deleted troublesome portions of the essay or guessed at spelling corrections. Teacher F expressed how difficult it was for him to watch students quickly glance at his feedback, that he had spent hours constructing, and toss the paper in the recycle bin as they walked out the door. Even though feedback alerted the learner's attention to an inconsistency in grammar, content or structure as described by Ferris (1999), the gap between feedback offered and feedback incorporated could be due to a lack of understanding, time constraints or busyness (Stary. 2010).

One can hardly read about Dana Ferris without remembering how she challenged John Truscott's (1996) controversial view of abandoning corrective feedback in a language learning classroom. In conjunction with this practice, one participant, Teacher E, said she offers no feedback on free writing tasks, but she will assess formal writing tasks. She justified her approach with the reason students were writing, freewriting was for fluency, not accuracy. It represented a way for students to express their thoughts in written form. According to data from this study, teachers believed that corrective feedback aided language learners in becoming better writers.

Instructors mentioned the use of various direct feedback methods. They discussed the incorporation of a rubric or checklist on formal tasks that clearly delineated expectations for that particular essay. When assessing, teachers limited their focus to 2-3 major patterns of errors. Teachers did their best to protect students from becoming overwhelmed by the immensity of the task of correcting every error. Min (2013) advocated that "ascertaining, rather than assuming, a full understanding of student intentions should be the top priority in her comments" (p. 634) when constructing feedback. Chen et al. (2017) supported the goal of understandability over accuracy. In the same way, Teacher M disclosed that she inserted articles and prepositions

without counting them as errors because not all languages contain those parts of speech. Positive feedback, teachers reported, helps learners to stay motivated and keep improving. Due to the personal nature of writing, teachers believed feedback should be individualized for each student. This required a considerable amount of the teacher's time to read, reread and appropriately tailor feedback for each learner.

The most common form of indirect feedback reported in this study was reading an essay or sentence aloud and asking students if the grammar and sentence structure sounded correct. Teacher H would read essays aloud to the class with expression, smoothing over grammar discrepancies. This practice was said to encourage students in their writing development because, as they heard a classmate's composition, learners realized that they also possessed the ability to compose interesting writing. In this manner, learners not only had to employ writing skills to complete the assigned task, but they also engaged in listening and speaking skills. When students struggled to verbalize the type of correction that needed to occur, the teacher interjected correct terms for the feedback. Teachers also designed games or projected student work on a screen with no names attached and asked the class to suggest edits as other means of indirect feedback.

Nine out of 10 participants overwhelming believed, according to Q12, that offering a combination of indirect and direct feedback aided students in becoming better writers. Using a rubric, reading a sentence or essay aloud and asking students to listen to determine whether it sounded correct, projecting student work on a screen with no name attached and asking students to double-check for errors, conferencing individually or as a group, or beginning with a small list of requirements and gradually adding to that as a checklist for components needed to complete each assignment represented how teachers offered combination feedback. Teacher M implemented the use of portfolios as a means of assessing because she graded on the process of

writing and each step of the process was kept in the portfolio for student reference. Even though learning styles varied from student to student, offering a combination of direct and indirect feedback made it personal for each learner. Combination feedback, according to teachers, encouraged metacognitive processing as students began to discover for themselves the reasons behind some of their errors. Instructors purposefully tailored feedback to what had been discussed in class; therefore, the feedback was appropriate to the goals of the assignment. They couched comments in positive terms by acknowledging what a student had written well before making suggestions for improvements.

Teachers believed that offering a combination of direct and indirect feedback ensured that students encountered a safe environment to write. By making sure feedback was positive, individualized and purposeful strengthened a learner's ability to compose academic tasks.

In regards to distinguishing between indirect and direct feedback, at times, there was confusion regarding whether the type of feedback a teacher mentioned was direct or indirect. The reasoning behind this discrepancy could be because it had been a long time since teachers had studied the technical terms for the types of feedback they felt achieved the most learner uptake. Other confusion may arise at the mention of free writing opportunities in conjunction with writing that is purposeful. This practice was an exercise designed to develop fluency as a writer to provide new writers with ways to communicate their thoughts.

Primary teachers believed in offering oral feedback to students who fall into the pre-reading category. One respondent, Teacher B, noted that gender played a role in whether students read and incorporated feedback. She observed that female students have more interest in feedback than male students. Several teachers kept a file of each student's written work from the beginning of the term, which acted as visible evidence of a learner's progress.

Frequently mentioned characteristics of feedback for EL writers to improve writing were purposeful, individualized, and positive. These terms aligned with Ferris' (1999) ideas that feedback should be "selective, prioritized and clear" (p. 4). Educators, according to Teacher C, E, and F endeavored to assign writing tasks that reached a benchmark as opposed to creating assignments as busywork. Teachers described how they crafted writing tasks that spanned more than one subject as an aid in preparing students to mainstream into grade-level classes. By integrating self-editing opportunities, teachers believed they help to build metacognitive skills for recognizing errors and provided students an occasion to recast or reformulate sentences at their own discretion. They also patterned writing tasks after types of inquiries students would encounter on the standardized Access Test that measured a learner's English fluency. Whether it was free writing or composing an academic essay that required research and collaboration with classmates, teachers tried to assign purpose to every writing task. They made every effort to propel students on to the next benchmark.

RQ2: Do teachers report that students incorporate corrective feedback in future writing tasks?

Responses to Q10 and Q11 supported the fact that teachers believe that their feedback produced beneficial results as learners advanced academically. Teachers recounted stories of students who integrated feedback into future assignments and others who did not. Teacher C stated that a key ingredient for motivating students to read the feedback was whether they were getting ready to exit the ESL program. Teacher A discussed the fact that since some of her students are pre-readers, she conferenced with them and gave oral feedback. Respondents differentiated between two types of writing tasks—formal and informal writing. Formal writing represented essays, for a grade, while informal writing represented a means of developing

fluency. For example, Teacher K, related a story of a student who became the "best writer in the class" by taking feedback from previous tasks and incorporating that into the current task. Teachers modeled good writing for students in dialogue journals and on the board as they guided the class in composition. They equipped students with the language and grammar necessary for composition. Teacher M summed up this answer by remarking that for her classes, no research has taken place that either supports or negates whether students actually incorporated feedback into future writing tasks.

Participants divided students into three groups: students who are motivated to learn and go above and beyond the requirements when completing an assignment, students who are good students and complete everything that is required of them, and other students who attend school because they have to. To bridge the gap between whether students assimilated feedback into current and future assignments Teacher F, occasionally incorporated a peer feedback process where students were given someone else's paper and asked to fix the errors they discovered. By tasking students with this responsibility, they were hopefully able to decipher inconsistencies in a peer's work and remember to adjust their own writing the next time. Teachers who held students accountable for feedback encouraged the development of meta-language skills, where students understood why an error was marked. Teacher M reiterated that she did not "care what level you came in at, I care where you end… I want to see progress."

Teachers also supported the scaffolded learning concept where a mentor/teacher guided a student towards independent mastery of a skill(s) as teacher support faded in the background, Jiang and Yu (2014). Teachers described the process of writing using the '*I do, We do, You do'* formula (Teacher M), a tool that guided students towards independence. They modeled good writing for students on a whiteboard or in a dialogue journal (*I do*). Primary teachers read stories

about specific topics and built a word wall of vocabulary related to that topic. Secondary and post-secondary instructors modeled the writing they expected for assignments in a dialogue journal or whiteboard. They also provided sentence starters as a tool to spark the flow of creativity. Together, as a class, they brainstormed how to construct a sentence, paragraph, or essay (We do). These sentences were written or projected in front of the class. Finally, students had an opportunity to practice what they had learned on an assignment (You do). They could always look back at the model on the whiteboard, word wall or sentence patterning chart and imitate the 'we do' steps. The practice of scaffolded instruction has the potential to guide students from passive learning to active learning, where they have the skills to apply key principles and writing techniques into current tasks. As students incorporate feedback into current and future writing assignments, they have the propensity to blossom as writers.

Suggestions

A common characteristic of participants interviewed for this study was the passion each one expressed for teaching ESL learners. Teachers compared the earliest learners with a sponge that soaks up everything. It is so easy to see progress from no language to communicable language. I suggest that teachers continue to tailor feedback to each student by getting to know student's backgrounds and cultural orientation through informal writing. An essential characteristic for ESL teachers would be to assign writing tasks that aim at mastering a specific goal. Students need to clearly understand the expectations for the task. As has been discussed, the goal is to keep students motivated to develop writing skills. Honing feedback to two or three major error patterns alerts a learner to a fixable problem without overwhelming them. As learners progress in their composition ability, they gain confidence and begin to experiment with more complex forms of writing.

This research did not ask students whether they incorporated feedback into future writing tasks, which may provide the stimulus for further study. The data is based on what teachers believe about feedback, but getting a student's perspective would undoubtedly shed a different light on the matter. If students perceive feedback as an effort to discredit an already fragile ego, they may not desire to learn from or even try to understand the feedback. By asking students how they perceive feedback could provide a topic for further research. Future studies could seek to determine more accurately whether learners actually read the feedback offered. If they read it, do they understand it? Asking learners which methods of feedback they find the most helpful and which methods they find the most harmful. A danger of questioning students would be finding those in the "I do not care" category. This presents a danger in that those students may respond impulsively to the query without processing whether the information helped or hindered the research. A researcher would need to carefully craft questions to elicit insight from all types; the motivated learners, the good learners and the "I do not care about school" learners. It would also be interesting to study students from classrooms that have adopted the use of rewriting and feedback reflection forms to discover the impact of these practices on writing skills.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study would include the small number of participants interviewed. Ten teachers from the central portion of the United States, amongst a pool of thousands of ESL teachers from elsewhere in the United States and around the world, offer a very small sampling of teachers. Included in this limitation would be the fact that all the teachers were white Americans. In light of this fact, it would be interesting to interview EFL teachers in Hong Kong, for instance, and discover how they would answer these questions. Having recently taken up residence there, the researcher has discovered that education in Hong Kong pushes

students to excel in the earliest of years. One gentleman summed it up by saying, "When a baby is born in Hong Kong, parents start looking for the 'right' kindergarten to attend." Summer break still finds students filling out homework packets and honing their math, reading and writing skills. Because of the priority placed on education, the researcher imagines that the data set would look differently if it included those teachers from other cultures.

Another limitation would be the fact that the data represents only what teachers reported. Whether they carry out those beliefs in the classroom is beyond the scope of this study, as no classroom observation took place. For example, Q10 asked teachers to tell what percentage of their students read your feedback. Data from this question represents an estimate of what they believe; no research was conducted to discover an exact percentage.

Interestingly, teachers had a lot to say about corrective feedback. A limitation that could wield a double-edged sword in acting as a weakness and strength is the broad scope of the educational expertise of participants. As a deficit, it offered quite a broad spectrum of educational, experiential and language competency levels. Four of the ten respondents had experience teaching English as a Foreign language in previously described parts of the world; the other six had solely taught English as a Second language in the United States. Focusing on one age group of learners as opposed to interviewing teachers from all age groups could have produced more consistent data. On the other hand, as an asset, it offered a broad spectrum of educational and language competency levels. The data spanned a wide range of teachers— primary teachers, secondary teacher and post-secondary teachers, gleaning information from all levels of education.

A final limitation would include the researcher's bias as she designed and compiled data. Biases could be due to misinterpretation of the data as the researcher read and reread the

transcripts and sought to represent participants' responses accurately. Biases because the researcher has not been a full-time teacher but has only had occasional exposure as a substitute teacher with ESL classroom practices could also have hindered the scope of the Interview Questions.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Participants of this study reported that they believe that offering corrective feedback on written tasks aids students in their written production. It was discovered that the majority of teachers from elementary to post-secondary level of education believed that offering a combination of direct and indirect feedback assisted the development of metacognitive strategies when implementing changes in current and future written assignments. Instructors embraced the practice of offering corrective feedback on written tasks in an effort to equip students with appropriate grammatical and procedural instruction. Writing instructors spent countless hours reading and rereading written tasks as they aspired to tailor corrective feedback to further student development without crushing motivation. Feedback that is purposeful, individualized and positive provided motivation for new writers to continue in the assimilation of the English language and culture. Scaffolded learning helps to guide students towards independence in the writing process. Teachers offer feedback because they believe it has value; learners who read and understand feedback can benefit from incorporating it into current and future writing tasks.

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Appendix A: Background Questions

1. Name:

2. Address:

3. Phone:

4. Nationality:

5. Do you have any objections to me recording the interview for future reference?

6. Number years teaching ESL classes:

7. School where you teach (or have taught):

8. Institution or type of ESL training received:

9. Please describe ESL classroom characteristics: (nation of origin, age, English level, male/female, etc.

10. Which level(s) do you enjoy teaching the most?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What kind of training have you received in regard to giving feedback on ESL writing tasks? How has the training influenced your feedback strategy?

2. Compare and contrast differences between native writers and ESL writers.

3. Could you describe when and what kind of assignment (intersentential, dialogue journal, or essay) you might give as a first writing assignment for an intermediate ESL class?

4. Tell me a story of how you prepare writing classes before assigning graded work, ie building atmosphere and safe spaces?

5. Could you tell me a story of how you would assess each type of writing task (intersentential, dialogue journal, or essay) in regard to the types of feedback (direct or indirect) you would offer?

6. Could you tell me a story of how you would assess grammatical errors using direct feedback that identifies the location and type of error in an intersentential task? dialogue journal? essay?

7. Could you tell me a story of how you would assess grammatical errors using indirect feedback that offers clues regarding the error but does not directly specify where it is located in an intersentential task? dialogue journal? essay?

8. Do you believe future ESL writing improves as a direct result of corrective feedback? If so, please tell me a story about a type(s) of feedback you believe has helped improve writing?

9. In question 8 you mentioned that you have used _____ (type) of feedback with ESL students, tell me a story about using other methods?

10. Tell me stories about grading where you had evidence that students had read your feedback and stories where you doubt they had read your feedback. Then tell me what percentage of students you believe read your feedback.

11. Do you believe student writing would improve from receiving no corrective feedback? Why or Why not?

12. Please rate in order of effectiveness (1 as the least effective, 3 as the most effective) which type(s) of feedback (direct feedback, indirect feedback, or a combination of direct and indirect feedback) you believe results in the greatest improvement. Why?

13. Is there anything else I should know about corrective feedback?

Appendix C: IRB Approval

ST. CLOUD STATE
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Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Rebecca Arndt

Email: arre1401@stcloudstate.edu

**IRB PROTOCOL
DETERMINATION:
Expedited Review-1**

Project Title: A Qualitative Study of Corrective Feedback

Advisor John Madden

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1832 - 2342	**Type:** Expedited Review-1	**Today's Date:** 7/26/2018
1st Year Approval Date: 7/25/2018	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date: 7/24/2019	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**