A Case Study of Teacher Feedback on Thai University Students' Essay Writing

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of written feedback on writing is influenced by various variables, including students' proficiency levels, prior learning experiences, expectations and educational contexts. Although Thai students are reported to have serious problems in English writing, which are partly caused by their culturally-based English learning styles, few studies have been conducted to find out how teachers assist them through their feedback. This study thus reports on the practice of teacher feedback in terms of its forms, locations, types and purposes with a consideration of several influential factors in an essay writing class at a university in Thailand. Furthermore, the levels of the students' reactions to the teacher feedback, the effects of their revisions and their revision strategies were also examined. To learn about these students' opinions on the effectiveness of the feedback strategies employed, a survey with the whole class and a focus-group interview were also conducted at the end of the course. The results showed the students' active engagement in responding to the teacher feedback, and this tends to assert the crucial roles of teachers' knowledge of students' learning experiences, English proficiency levels, feedback preferences and classroom settings on the success of written corrective feedback. Though the findings might not be generalized in other EFL settings, they show how in-service teachers adjust feedback strategies in their actual teaching situations to prepare EFL students to become self-regulating writers.

Keywords: Error correction; Teacher feedback; Essay writing; Thai student; EFL writer

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English poses several challenges for students who learn English as a second or foreign language (L2/FL) as they have to get used to new conventions of writing in English-speaking cultures as well as English grammatical forms (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). These challenges make writing one of the most difficult skills to develop and create an overreliance on the teacher for all kinds of corrections and guidance. Thus, assisting L2/FL students improve their writing in accordance with their learning needs and the course objectives becomes the main concern of many EFL writing teachers and researchers (Polio & Williams, 2009). One of the methods widely used to assist these students' writing is to indicate their errors in using the target language. This teaching technique is generally known as written corrective feedback (WCF). The feedback can be comments, questions and suggestions that a reader gives to a writer for revision. As stated by Beuningen (2010, p. 6), WCF serves as a necessary condition to facilitate students' interlanguage development because it assists them in "noticing the gap between their own interlanguage output and the target language input" and reorganizing their linguistic mental processes. This instructional technique is believed to be an indispensible part in guiding and encouraging students to improve their L2/FL writing accuracy (Ferris, 1999, 2002; Lee, 2004). Hence, its efficacy in terms of the strategies for providing feedback and students' response to the feedback has been investigated in various

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educational contexts and with different groups of L2/FL learners (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, 2009; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Lee, 2004; Rahimi, 2009).

Despite the ample evidence in support of WCF in language learning and linguistic accuracy, some research found it to be unnecessary, ineffective or even harmful (Truscott, 1996, 2007). In fact, besides the mixed results reported, it is still unclear which types (direct or indirect, electronic, metalinguistic, focused/selective or unfocused/comprehensive) (Ellis, 2009) and how much of WCF that would work best for L2/FL learners. Some scholars argued that direct WCF (i.e., where learners are given the corrections) is more advantageous than its indirect counterpart (i.e., where errors are indicated and students are asked to self-correct). It is because direct WCF enables learners to instantly internalize the correct form provided by the teacher and makes the processing load manageable for learners, leading to their development of linguistic competence (Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012; Sheen, 2007). Indirect WCF, in contrast, is believed to run the risk of overloading students' attentional capacity. However, advocates of the latter stated that learners whose errors are corrected indirectly are engaged in a more profound form of language processing when they are self-editing their writing, resulting in their long-term acquisition (Ferris, 1995, 2002; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In a similar way, varied results about the use of focused WCF (feedback directed at one or a few error types) and unfocused WCF (indicating all errors in a learner's text) were also found from previous research. While some researchers reported the use of unfocused WCF was more useful and desired by the learners (Beuningen et al., 2012; Ferris, 2010; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012), others found focused WCF manageable, facilitative of learning and beneficial to learners' accuracy (Beuningen, 2010; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Li, 2010; Sheen, 2007; Storch, 2010).

These contradictory results tend to puzzle L2/FL writing teachers as the painstaking effort to respond to their students' writing may not be cost-effective. Despite these contradictory findings there are equally strong reasons for teachers to continue giving feedback because it is important and students still regard its value (Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 1999, 2007; Guénette, 2007; Lee, 2009). However, several ways of improving the practical issues underlined should be taken into considerations. First, teachers should not "spoon-feed" the students by changing students' language because they may misinterpret students' meanings (Ferris, 1995). Additionally, feedback must be useable and adjusted to students' existing level of language proficiency because evidence have shown that students often do not understand the feedback and do not know what they are expected to do with the feedback, resulting in wrong revisions (Ferris, 1995; Nassaji & Swain, 2000). Furthermore, students' preferences for certain types and amounts of WCF were reported to partly account for the effectiveness of WCF because their preferences affect their use of it for learning (Ferris, 1995; Lee, 2005). For the effectiveness of WCF, the incongruity between students' and teachers' perceptions regarding WCF should therefore be avoided (Black & Nanni, 2016). Moreover, Ellis (2009), Guénette (2007) and Hyland and Hyland (2006) also emphasized that there is no best way to do WCF because its success or failure depends on the classroom setting, students' previous learning experiences, types of errors, writing tasks and a collection of other unknown variables. Finally, while many researchers favor focused WCF to prevent overload for L2/FL writers, its ecological validity for classrooms where more comprehensive feedback may be desired has been questioned (Beuningen, 2010; Storch, 2010). In fact, restricted feedback could divert learners' attention away from a broader view of accuracy, which possibly hinders their language development in other linguistic domains (Beuningen, 2010; Ferris, 2010). Thus, alternative WCF that can be both practical and effective in improving L2/FL students' writing accuracy is necessary.

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Mahboob (2015) introduces cohesive and coherent feedback with four types of feedback or four possible purposes (*Hand holding*, *Carrying*, *Bridging* and *Base jumping*) (Figure 1) which teachers can employ to respond to students' writing according to the level of support needed from each individual learner. "Cohesiveness in feedback refers to feedback being purposeful and structured, and coherence in feedback refers to its ability to guide students into an understanding of what, why and how they need to revise particular aspects of their writing." (Mahboob, 2015, p. 419). Following his feedback model, teachers can vary their feedback in terms of explicitness (level of specificity of feedback) and amount of rationale (whether teachers explain what is problematic and why) based on their assessment of students' needs. In particular, the degree of explicitness is high when teachers correct students' work and remediate their errors explicitly; but it is low when teachers identify problems but do not provide explicit correction. Similarly, rationale is high when teachers give detailed explanation about a problem, and it is low when little or no explanation is provided for it. Such feedback strategies are believed to scaffold individual students' language development and helps them transfer this learning to become independent and self-regulating writers (Mahboob, 2015).

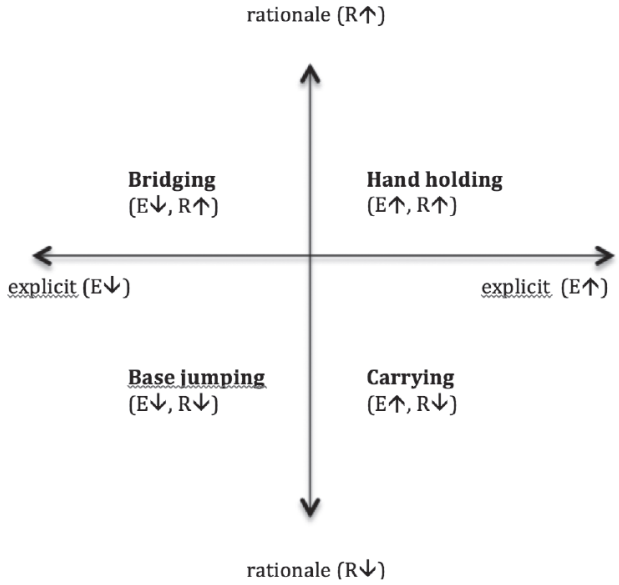

FIGURE 1. A typology of coherence feedback (Mahboob, 2015, p. 410)

Based on the skill acquisition theory, which states that improving any skill necessitates both implicitly and explicitly formed knowledge through practice, Evans, Hartshorn, Mc Collum, and Wolfersberger (2010) and Hartshorn, and Evans (2012) developed an instructional strategy (Dynamic WCF) to help L2 learners improve their writing accuracy by ensuring that instruction, practice, and feedback are manageable, meaningful, timely and constant. Students' learning activities are meaningful when instruction is explicit, students understand the task and its purpose, and they understand the feedback they receive and what they are to do with it. Instruction, practice and feedback are timely when the instruction addresses learners' most relevant problems from their recent writing, the practice immediately follows the instruction, and the feedback is provided promptly after the practice. This process is constant when teachers and learners engage in this continual cycle of teaching and feedback-based learning over an extended period.

With the multifaceted nature of WCF and in the reported culturally-based English learning and teaching context in Thailand (Black & Nanni, 2016; Root, 2016), how teachers practice this teaching technique with their students has not been documented in the literature.

This study is expected to shed more light on how WCF is applied and its effectiveness in Thailand where English has been taught as a foreign language and a separate subject for decades. Furthermore, Thai students' English writing is of particular concern as most writing programs in Thailand are still taught using the traditional model, emphasizing the accuracy of grammatical structures and vocabulary (Black & Nanni, 2016; Chamcharatsri, 2010; Puengpipattrakul, 2013). However, insufficient research has been conducted to help Thai students improve their writing in English. In fact, besides general recommendations to solve Thai EFL learners' problems of grammatical errors (Hinnon, 2014), a few studies reported on how teachers provide WCF to help them write better. Wongsothorn (1994) found that direct feedback with explanations and examples for corrections helped improve Thai students' writing. However, Boonpattanaporn (2008) argued that instructors' mere reading of students' texts, indicating errors and giving feedback might not be sufficient to help students improve their writing ability. Honsa (2013) found the usefulness of a self-assessment program in improving Thai university students' writing ability.

In an attempt to help Thai university students improve their writing, Nguyen (2017a, 2018a, 2019) developed a combined peer-teacher feedback model in her paragraph-writing classes. The findings indicated its success in terms of students' positive attitudes towards this feedback model, the usefulness of peer comments, high percentages of feedback incorporations and the high overall writing scores. From the researcher's knowledge, research on the effectiveness of WCF on Thai students' writing of longer texts (an essay) seems to be scanty (Boonpattanaporn, 2008; Honsa, 2013). The main aim of the study, therefore, is to fill this gap by reporting the application of WCF in an essay-writing class in terms of how feedback was conducted, what its types, forms and purposes were, and how students responded regarding their attention, strategies and effects of revisions. The research questions posited for this study are 1) What feedback strategies do this group of Thai students expect to have from their teacher? 2) What types, forms and purposes of feedback does the teacher provide on the learners' writings? and 3) What types of revisions do the learners make to their writings as a result of WCF?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted with 65 fourth-year English-major students (whose proficiency level of English was intermediate or upper- intermediate) in an essay-writing class (Writing 3) at a university in Thailand. The English curriculum at this university has three obligatory writing courses, namely Writing 1 (paragraph writing), Writing 2 (short compositions) and Writing 3 (five-paragraph academic essays), and they are taught in three successive terms of fourteen weeks each, starting from their third year of study. The objective of Writing 3 subject at this university is to enable students to write a five-paragraph essay of *explanation* (W1)*, problem-solution* (W2)*, comparison-contrast* (W3)*,* and *persuasion* (W4), using the course book "*Writers at work–the essay*" by Dorothy E. Zemach and Lynn Stafford-Yilmaz, 2nd edition, 2010.

INSTRUMENTS

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In order to familiarize the students with the basic structure of an academic essay, in the first six weeks of the course a genre-based approach was employed to teach each essay element through step-by-step instructions as well as thorough practice with the materials developed by

Nguyen (2017b, 2018b). In the last eight weeks of the course, the generic structure and grammatical features of four essays (*explanation*, *problem-solution, comparison-contrast* and *persuasion*) were in turn explicitly taught, and students were asked to write one complete essay for each to submit to the teacher's email a week later. As these Thai students were trained to do peer-review and how to respond to the feedback provided by their friends and teacher in their Writing 1 and 2 courses (Nguyen, 2017a, 2019), they were required to ask friends to give feedback on their writings, using the given checklist (Appendix A) before submitting them to the teacher. With the same checklist, the teacher then used track changes to comment on their essays (Appendix B).

In order to avoid the mismatch between students' expectations and the teacher's WCF as reported in previous studies (Black & Nanni, 2016; Han & Hyland, 2015) (Research question 1), a 5-point Likert scale survey (strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, not sure = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5) was conducted at the beginning of the course (Table 1). The findings of the survey showed that the comprehensive WCF was preferred by this group of Thai students, thus it was applied to check their two drafts of each essay. Following the suggestions by Evans et al. (2010), and Hartshorn and Evans (2012) on providing meaningful, timely and constant WCF, the teacher returned the students' first drafts with feedback via email before the following class. Their questions regarding the feedback were answered and paired with mini-lessons at the beginning of the next class. The students were then asked to revise their essays at home and resubmitted them to the teacher's email for further feedback and grades which they also received a week later. This feedback process continued until they completed all four essays. For the WCF provision, the teacher employed Mahboob's (2015) coherence feedback strategies in providing support needed for each learner. Because the teacher taught this group of Thai students for the three successive writing courses (Writing 1, 2, & 3), she knew each student's weaknesses in their English writing.

DATA ANALYSIS

To answer the research question 2, all the feedback provided by the teacher in the first drafts of each essay (260 essays in total) was recorded in terms of its forms (*codes* (c), *questions* (q), *statements* (s), *imperatives* (i), *exclamation* (e) or any combination of these), locations (on the margin or at the end of the essays), types (*Organization*, *Grammar/Mechanics* and *Content/Discourse*) and purposes (*Handholding*, *Carrying*, *Bridging* and *Base jumping*). Following Ferris' (1997) revision rating scale and Faigley and Witte's (1981) revision methods, students' revisions on the second drafts (260 essays) were examined according to the levels of their reactions (*no*, *minimum* or *substantial*), the effects of their revisions (*improved*, *mixed* or *negative*) and their revision strategies (*addition*, *deletion*, *substitution*, *permutation* and *distribution* and *consolidation*). To ensure the reliability of data coding, an inter-rater, who holds a PhD degree in English Language Studies and has eight-years teaching experience with Thai undergraduates, was employed to check and record the coding in all essays. In particular, the coding and discussion between the two coders were conducted on the weekly basis in the last eight weeks of the course (2 weeks for each essay type). For example, after the students' first drafts of the first essay-type (*explanation*) were commented by the teacher, the two coders separately checked and recorded the feedback forms, types and purposes given by the teacher, and discussion on the discrepancies between the two coders was also organized until both agreed to classify all feedback forms, types and purposes into the same categories. A week later after the second drafts were submitted and marked by the teacher, the two coders also examined and coded the levels of students' reactions, the effects of their revisions and their revision strategies independently. The coding differences on the

second drafts were also discussed until the agreement was reached. The same procedures for coding and recording the first and second drafts of the other three essays (*problem-solution, comparison-contrast* and *persuasion*) continued until the end of the course.

To learn about these students' opinions on the effectiveness of the WCF strategies employed in the course (Research question 3), another survey with the whole class (Table 6) and semi-structured focus-group interview with 20 students were conducted at the end of the course to gain more insights from the text analysis (Appendix C).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings on the students' expectations for teacher feedback strategies, teacher feedback (forms, locations, types and functions), students' revisions (reactions, revision effects and revision strategies) in the four essays and their evaluations on the effectiveness of the employed WCF are presented in this section.

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS

As seen in Table 1, almost all of these Thai students (97%) would like their teacher to check their writing (Item 2) and to have comprehensive feedback (Item 3) with a means of 4.83 each. Additionally, a similar number of these students expected their teacher to comment on all aspects of their writing (organization, ideas, grammar and mechanics), with a very high mean score (4.63) (Item 8). In contrast, a low mean score (around 2.0) was found in most of the items asking their preferences on teacher feedback (Items 5-7). Furthermore, these students did not show their preferences for either direct or indirect feedback (Items 10 & 12, respectively) but expected to know the causes of their committed errors. In fact, with the mean scores of 4.35 and 3.57 showing their agreement to Items 9 and 11, it shows that they preferred to have teachers' explanations for their errors.

TABLE 1. Students' expectations for teacher feedback strategies

	Items	Means	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
1	I would not like my teacher to check my writing	1.70	2	22	76
2	I really need my teacher to check my writing	4.83	97	3	0
3	I would like my teacher to indicate all of my errors	4.83	96.8	1.6	1.6
4	I would like my teacher to indicate some serious errors (not all)	2.63	34	20	46
5	I would like my teacher to focus on my ideas only	1.71	3	16	81
6	I would like my teacher to focus on my grammatical mistakes only	2.05	5	27	68
7	I would like my teacher to focus on the mechanics of my writing only	2.75	35	14	51
8	I would like my teacher to focus on my organization, ideas, grammar and mechanics	4.63	93.6	4.8	1.6
9	I would like my teacher to identify my errors, explain why they are wrong and then give me the corrected forms	**4.35**	72.5	19	9.5
10	I would like my teacher to identify my errors and give me the corrected forms	2.83	30	27	43
11	I would like my teacher to identify my errors and explain why they are wrong	3.57	49	32	19
12	I would like my teacher to identify my errors and let me correct my own errors	2.46	8	46	46

As revealed in the survey, these Thai students' expectations for comprehensive feedback on organization, ideas, grammar and mechanics could be accounted by its nature as

the most authentic feedback strategy (Beuningen, 2010; Ferris, 2010). This finding also confirmed the claim made by previous researchers that students still regard the value of teacher feedback (Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 1999, 2007; Guénette, 2007; Lee, 2009) and partly reflected the commonly-held belief by most Asian students that their teacher is the only source of knowledge (Hu, 2005). Furthermore, these Thai students' expectations to have the errors corrected by the teacher (Item 9) are likely to stem from their prior exposure to teacher-centered learning (Chamcharatsri, 2010; Root, 2016). In fact, as reported by Hallinger and Lee (2011), despite Thai government pushed for a change from teacher-centered to learner-centered education, there has been little improvement. In fact, Thai students even had negative attitudes towards the learner-centered approach. It may be argued that such attitudes would indicate their wish to be spoon-fed with the corrections. This group of Thai students, on the contrary, showed that they were responsible for their learning and yearned for their writing improvement by expecting to understand the nature of their errors (Items 9 & 11). This difference could be due to their prior experiences in using the combined peer-teacher feedback in two earlier writing courses (Nguyen, 2017a, 2019). As revealed in the group-focus interview with students, the feedback activities in their previous writing courses made them cognizant of the necessity of feedback in enhancing their writing.

> Excerpt 1: "*I know it's necessary to have feedback from teachers and friends. They helped me learn and improve a lot in my previous writing courses*."

Moreover, it is generally accepted that when L2/FL students are sufficiently and continuously trained to provide feedback and respond to identified errors, the facilitative role of feedback in enhancing their writing accuracy would be recognized (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

TEACHER FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

FORMS AND LOCATIONS OF TEACHER'S WCF

Table 2 shows the syntactic structures and locations of the feedback given in the four essays (W1-4). As stated in the Method section, all the feedback provided by the teacher in the first drafts of each essay (260 essays in total) was recorded in terms of its forms (*codes* (c), *questions* (q), *statements* (s), *imperatives* (i), *exclamation* (e) or any combination of these), and locations (on the margin or at the end of the essays).

TABLE 2. Forms and locations of teacher's WCF

Forms	**(c)**	**(q)**	**(s)**	**(i)**	**(e)**	**s-i/i-s**	**q-i/i-q**	**q-s/s-q**	**e-i**	**s-e**	**Total**
W1	751	91	90	85	20	23	1	3	2	15	1081
W2	496	72	206	102	20	13	11	8	2	27	957
W3	764	12	31	41	7	15	0	0	0	27	897
W4	561	46	46	69	10	5	4	0	0	16	757
Total	2572 (70%)	221 (6%)	373 (10%)	297 (8%)	57 (1.45%)	56 (1.44%)	16 (0.41%)	11 (0.3%)	4 (0.1%)	85 (2.3%)	3692
Marginal WCF	2572	189	86	181	46	9	3	3	4	9	3102
End WCF	0	32	287	116	11	47	13	8	0	76	590

Among 10 forms of feedback, (c) (**e.g., *T* for *tense*, *VF* for *verb form***) accounted for almost 70% of all errors (2572 instances), followed by (s) (**e.g., *There are no topic sentences in body paragraphs*.**), (i) (**e.g., *Delete irrelevant details in this paragraph***) and (q) (**e.g., *What does "they" refer to*?**), ranging from 10% to 5%. Only 57 instances of (e) (**e.g., *irrelevant, good arguments, too general***) were found, and the combinations of these forms

(s-i/i-s; q-i/i-q; q-s/s-q; e-i; & s-e) were present with a small number of instances. In terms of locations, there was more than five times more marginal than end feedback, 3102 and 590 instances, respectively. Although all (c) were given on the side of the texts, followed by a majority of (q), (i) and (e) (86%, 61%, 81%, respectively), more (s), s-i/i-s (**e.g., *Your essay does not answer the question. Read the question again carefully and rewrite it.***), i-q/q-i (**e.g., *check your paraphrases of the subtopics. Are they the same as those in your thesis statement*?**), q-s/s-q (**e.g., *Why did not you ask friends to comment on the content? You did not answer the question: problems and solutions to Thai students' difficulties in writing English essays.***) and s-e (**e.g., *Your ideas are clear and well organized. Very good!***) were present at the end of the essays.

Being informed with the students' feedback preferences, the teacher varied her comprehensive feedback techniques in terms of forms, types and functions through the use of track changes with the aim of scaffolding them. For grammatical and mechanics errors, (c) were employed to give students metalinguistic clues about the nature of their errors. This feedback technique met these students' expectations to know the causes of their errors (Items 9 & 11, Table 1). Furthermore, as argued by previous researchers (Beuningen, 2010; Ellis, 2009; Guénette, 2007), these clues would enable students to notice the gaps between their own interlanguage output and the target language input. Additionally, the prominent focus on *Grammar/Mechanics* in this study was to meet Thai students' common belief that it would be ineffective if writing teachers in Thailand did not focus on grammar (Chamcharatsri, 2010).

In a similar manner, to be context-specific, most (q), (i) and (e) was given (Table 2 & Appendix B). In contrast to (c), these feedback forms, however, focused on all error types (*Grammar/mechanics*, *Organization*, and *Content/Discourse*) where the teacher believed her students needed to know more when addressing the issues. As claimed by Ferris (2007), the more explicit the feedback is, the more consistent uptake will be. Frequently given at the end of the essays, most (s) and its various combinations (s-i/i-s; q-s/s-q; s-e) (Table 2) served as an overall evaluation or summary of all issues that writers needed to attend to. The end-feedback forms in this study hence mainly focused on global issues (*Content* and *Organization*) (**e.g. *Your essay did not answer the question completely; no clear solutions to the problems were discussed. You don't have a clear organization for your answer; check how to write this kind of essay and how to link each part of your essay together.)*** while the language errors which were extensively given in the margin were briefly mentioned in one sentence (**e.g., *You should check and fix your language use as well***).

TYPES AND PURPOSES OF TEACHER'S WCF

Following Mahboob's (2015) coherence feedback strategies (*Handholding*, *Carrying*, *Bridging* and *Base jumping*), Table 3 displays the types and purposes of feedback given in 260 first drafts of four essays written by this group of Thai students. Using the same checklist given to the students for their self-check and comments on their friends' essays (Appendix A), the teacher commented on the organization, grammar/mechanics and content/discourse of essays. However, there were great variations in the frequencies and purposes of feedback given to these aspects across four essays.

TABLE 3. Types and purposes of teachers' WCF

Writing	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	**Total (%)**
Purposes	**Handholding**				**Carrying**				**Bridging**				**Base jumping**				
Organization	18	8	4	0	46	27	18	0	65	104	97	71	8	4	2	0	472 (12.7)
Grammar/ Mechanics	6	4	2	0	77	49	45	0	640	574	571	606	44	30	32	29	2709 (73.5)
Content/ Discourse	23	6	2	0	42	22	19	0	96	121	96	51	16	10	7	0	511 (13.8)
Total	47	18	8	0	165	98	82	0	801	799	764	728	68	44	41	29	3692 (100)
	73 (2%)				345 (9%)				3,092 (84%)				182 (5%)				

First, almost three-quarter of the total amount of feedback was given on *Grammar/Mechanics* (2709 instances) while around 13% each commented on *Organization* and *Content/Discourse* (511 & 472 instances, respectively). Among the four functions, *Bridging* was by far the most prominently used in each error type and across the four essays, accounting for 84% of all identified errors (3,092 instances). According to Mahboob (2015), this feedback strategy helps the learner understand what the problems are, but learners are not told how to fix their problems explicitly. As revealed in Items 10 and 12 (Table 1), these students expected to know the nature of their errors, and this feedback technique met their preference. Black and Nanni (2016) also claim that to ensure the effectiveness of this teaching tool in Thailand, it is necessary to avoid the different expectations between students and teachers. The feedback with *Carrying* functions was ranked second, followed by *Base jumping* and *Handholding* (9%, 5% and 2%, respectively). This reflected the teacher's individualization of WCF with the intention to assist individual students based on her assessment of their needs. In fact, among 65 students, only a few needed a highest level of explicit and explanatory support (*Handholding*) while *Base jumping* was sufficient for some advanced learners who had relevant knowledge to understand what, why and how to fix identified errors. In contrast, *Carrying* was occasionally used to provide direct feedback (without explanation), mainly on lexico-grammatical issues when the teacher believed it would help students identify additional cases of a problem pointed earlier.

Another noticeable finding in each function group was a steady decrease in feedback instances given over the four essays, which resulted from a gradual fall in each error type in each writing. These students' self-efficacy in editing their own writing could account for such a steady reduction in each feedback function over the four essays. In fact, it was known in the interview that these students felt more confident and a sense of progress over several writings, and this information was also asserted in Items 1-3 (Table 6). Finally, there was a complete absence of *Handholding* and *Carrying* feedback in all error types in their last writing (W4). It could be concluded that such feedback strategies scaffolded the students' language development and gradually eliminated their teacher's considerable support.

Although Truscott (2007) confirmed the effectiveness of WCF in fixing local errors, this study found improvement in all the organization, grammar/mechanics and content/discourse in the students' essays. This success was due to the follow-up sections at the beginning of each class for questions regarding the feedback provided in their previous essays. These sections conducted with remedial mini-grammar lessons were aimed to ensure that these Thai students, who were reported to lack confidence in their ability to fix marked errors without teacher help (Black & Nanni, 2016), understood all comments before responding to them. As seen in Table 6 (Item 5), 74% of them confirmed that they always understood what to revise from the given feedback. Additionally, Ferris and Roberts (2001) also affirm that indirect feedback when used with follow-up discussion and clarifications,

directs students' attention primarily to incorrect language use, leading to their consciousness-raising and fostering their long-term acquisition.

STUDENTS' REVISIONS

Table 4 shows students' reactions to the teacher feedback given in their first drafts (*no*, *minimum* or *substantial*) and the effects of their revisions (*improved*, *mixed* or *negative*) in the second drafts. The first number in each cell refers to the instances of revision attempt and the effect for each feedback form while their percentages are given in brackets.

TABLE 4. Students' revisions

Feedback forms	**Revisions**						**Total**
	Attempt			**Effect**			
	no	*minimum*	*substantial*	*improved*	*mixed*	*negative*	
(c)	12 (1%)	436 (17%)	2124 (82%)	2053 (80%)	398 (14%)	121 (6%)	2572 (70%)
(q)	12 (5%)	46 (21%)	163 (74%)	132 (60%)	53 (24%)	36 (16%)	221 (6%)
(s)	69 (19%)	32 (8%)	272 (73%)	188 (50%)	145 (39%)	40 (11%)	373 (10%)
(i)	0 (0%)	34 (11%)	263 (89%)	174 (59%)	103 (35%)	20 (9%)	297 (8%)
(e)	11 (19%)	69 (11%)	40 (70%)	28 (49%)	16 (28%)	13 (23%)	57 (1.45%)
s-i/i-s	0 (0%)	7 (14%)	49 (86%)	31 (55%)	16 (29%)	9 (16%)	56 (1.44%)
q-i/i-q	5 (31%)	3 (19%)	8 (50%)	11 (69%)	2 (12%)	3 (19%)	16 (0.41%)
q-s/s-q	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	11 (0.3%)
e-i	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	4 (0.1%)
s-e	85 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	85 (2.3%)
Total	196 (5%)	567 (15%)	2929 (80%)	2629 (73%)	821 (20%)	242 (7%)	3692

As seen in this table, these students made great (*substantial*) effort to fix 80% of all forms of errors, resulting in the improvement of 73% of their total revisions, while 20% and 7% of all committed errors were found with *mixed* and *negative* revisions, respectively. Among all single-feedback forms (c, q, s, i & e), (c) was found with the highest frequency of successful (*improved*) revisions (80%) because *substantial* attempt (82%) was made to this feedback form. In contrast, with the students' greatest level of attempt (89%), only 59% of (i) revisions were *improved*. Furthermore, (s) and (e) were similar in both the low-attempt level and revision ineffectiveness. In fact, 19% of these feedback forms were recorded with "*no*" attempt, and around half of their revisions were found with *mixed* and *negative* results. Finally, in the combined-feedback forms, 85 instances of (s-e) were ignored because they were the teacher's compliments. While q-s/s-q accounted for the highest percentage of improved revisions (82%), q-i/i-q was ignored the most (31%). As explained in the interview (Excerpt 2), the negative effects of these students' revisions and their minimum reactions to the feedback given in s, e, i, q-i/i-q forms were because the feedback in these forms was not as specific as the one given in (c) and usually required them a considerable time to process and revise. This finding tends to suggest the necessity of details on what and how to revise the global errors in the feedback provision, especially for FL writers.

(Excerpt 2) "*The feedback at the end of my writing and an exclamations (e) (like irrelevant, too general, and so on) given on the margin confused me…I don't understand them and I don't know where and how to get started revising them! Although I spent so long time figuring out what I should fix them, I sometimes gave up on them*."

REVISION STRATEGIES

Table 5 displays how errors in each feedback form were fixed by these Thai students. *Substitution* was the most frequently used revision method (62%), and *addition* ranked second (10%), followed by *permutation* (rearrangement or rearrangement with substitutions) (9%), *deletion* (7%) and *distribution* (revising what has been compressed into a single unit so that it falls into more than one unit) (6%). Very few errors were fixed with *consolidation* (elements in two or more units are consolidated into one unit). Besides the list of revision changes by Faigley and Witte (1981, p. 403), *ignoring* the identified errors was also found as a revision strategy by the students, accounting for 5%. Besides the compliments (s-e), *ignoring* was also seen in errors given in (c), (e), (q), (s) and (i) forms (70, 17, 6, 4, & 2 instances, respectively). However, in addition to the incomprehensibility of the (s) and (e) feedback forms, as revealed earlier (Excerpt 2), it was surprising to know in the interview that these students' laziness was the cause of *ignoring* the indicated errors. In the interview, the students also added that these two feedback forms, (s) and (e), mainly focused on the errors on the content and organization of their essays, which were more difficult for them to fix than those on grammar and mechanics provided in (c); therefore, fixing these errors needed their considerable investment of time and energy. Furthermore, they reported that not responding to one or two comments would not upset the teacher and get them failed in the subject, and they sporadically skipped them (Excerpt 3).

(Excerpt 3) "*I infrequently ignored the errors on content as I don't know how to fix them. And I also know that my grades would not be too low if don't fix one or two errors at times, and the teacher would think that was my "carelessness"*."

This explanation would reflect the Buddhist principle of not attaching strongly to things which is believed to make Thai students quite flexible and pragmatic in their study (Gunawan, 2016; Wisadavet, 2003).

TABLE 5. Methods of revisions

Methods	***(c)***	***(q)***	***(s)***	***(i)***	***(e)***	***s-i/i-s***	***q-i/i-q***	***q-s/s-q***	***e-i***	***s-e***	***Total***	***%***
Addition	78	121	76	73	23	12	4	0	3	0	390	10.5
Substitution	2231	0	0	46	4	3	0	0	0	0	2284	62
Deletion	193	29	0	25	13	2	0	0	1	0	263	7
Permutation	0	53	67	151	0	34	9	11	0	0	325	9
Distribution	0	12	214	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	234	6
Consolidation	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0.5
Ignoring	70	6	4	2	17	0	0	0	0	85	184	5
Total	2572	221	373	297	57	56	16	11	4	85	3692	100

Table 5 also shows that different feedback forms were treated differently by this group of students. For example, although *substitution* was the most frequently employed, it was overwhelmingly used for (c) (2231 out of 2284 instances). Moreover, as seen in Table 4, the high percentage of effective revisions (73%) was overwhelmingly seen with (c), the feedback on *Grammar/Mechanics*, accounting for 70% of all feedback forms. *Distribution* was used to fix (s), which mainly commented on *Organization* and *Content/Discourse* at the end of the essays. A majority of (q) and (e) was fixed with *addition* while *permutation* was found to be frequently used in (i) and the combined-feedback forms (s-i/i-s, q-i/i-q, q-s/s-q).

Other revision methods were, however, adopted with low frequencies across all feedback forms. Although these Thai students' revision methods confirm the claim from previous studies (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009) that inexperienced writers tend to make surface changes, it would be considered as a first successful step in assisting them to become self-regulating writers. In fact, with the passive learning styles (Kongpetch, 2006), grammar-translation teaching approaches (Darasawang, 2007), and very few opportunities for students to represent their ideas and knowledge through the written mode in Thailand (Chamcharatsri, 2010; Nguyen, 2018b, 2019), these students' engagement in fixing their errors through various strategies would make them cognizant of the assessment criteria and the requirements of the writing.

STUDENTS' EVALUATIONS OF WCF

Table 6 shows the findings from the survey conducted at the end of the course to find out the students' evaluations of WCF's WCF. As suggested by Wiboolsri (2008), the mean score of 3.5 is the acceptable value representing a positive attitude. It can be concluded that these students were very positive towards this activity as the means of most surveyed items are much higher than 3.5.

TABLE 6. Students' evaluations of WCF

	Items	Means	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
1	I am more confident with my writing in English now	3.32	33	61	6
2	My skills and knowledge in writing English essays has been improved	3.72	66.5	32	1.5
3	I now know how to revise my writing after finishing the first draft	3.58	64	21	15
4	I always pay attention to the errors identified by the teacher and try to fix all of them	4.11	**83**	17	0
5	I always understand what the teacher would like me to correct in my essay	4.21	74	23	3
6	I find the teacher's marginal comments easy for me to correct my writing	4.03	78	18	4
7	I find the teacher's end comments easy for me to correct my writing	3.91	75	14	11
8	I always fix the marginal errors effectively	3.75	63	28	9
9	I always fix the end errors effectively	3.12	31	48	21
10	I always check whether or not my corrections improve my writing	3.03	27	46	27
11	I sometimes don't respond to the teacher's feedback because I don't understand it	2.63	13	26	61

Among these items, Item 4 (their engagement in fixing all identified errors) gained the highest mean by most of these students (83%). There tended to be two reasons for these students' engagement in fixing most errors. First, it was known in the interview that the follow-up activities helped maintain their focus because their knowledge gaps were gradually filled (Excerpt 4).

> (Excerpt 4) "*I really like the follow-up activities at the beginning of each lesson because by talking with teachers, I can know why I made mistakes in my writing and how to fix them. I learned and improved a lot from the teachers' mini grammar lessons*."

This information could indicate that teachers' role as a support and resource provider is crucial in encouraging Thai students to become self-regulating writers. Another reason for

their active involvement in error corrections is the power-distance culture in Thai educational systems in which students are expected to be compliant, obedient and deferring to their teachers (Gunawan, 2016). In fact, this culture was partly reflected through these students' greatest attempt to revise the errors indicated in (i) (***e.g., Delete irrelevant details in this paragraph***) because this feedback form was taken as teacher command (Table 4).

While around a quarter of them were neutral towards Item 5 which asks for their understanding of teacher feedback, 74% of them reported to know what to revise from the teacher' suggestions. As seen in Item 11, only 13% of them revealed that they ignored the errors due to their ambiguity. Although a majority of them showed that both marginal and end comments were comprehensible to them (Items 6-7), these students found end-feedback (mostly in the forms of (s), s-i/i-s, q-s/s-q, and s-e) more difficult to fix (Items 8-9). The interview information in Excepts 2 and 3 (on pages 9 & 10) could thus clarify why these students claimed fixing feedback given at the end of the essay was more challenging, as compared to the margin ones. This mainly led to *mixed* and *negative* results of around half of their revisions for (s) and (e) (Table 4). Finally, despite not yet being confident in their English writing (Item 1), around two-thirds of these students acknowledged the effectiveness of WCF in assisting them with their essay writing (Items 2 and 3).

CONCLUSION

This study reports on a teacher's feedback practice with 65 Thai university students in their essay-writing class. To suit her students' expectations in their culturally-embedded learning and teaching environment and to effectively scaffold them according to the level of support needed, the teacher varied her feedback techniques in terms of forms, types and functions. The findings showed the relative effectiveness of this practice in involving students in error corrections and preparing them to become independent writers. Besides the significance of meaningful, timely and constant instruction, feedback and practice (Evans et al., 2010; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012), this study also confirms the general claims about the importance of students' prior learning experiences, English proficiency levels, feedback preferences and classroom settings on the success of WCF (Black & Nanni, 2016; Ellis, 2009; Guénette, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, similar to previous research, this study found more teacher comments and student revisions on *Grammar/Mechanics*, which led to their improvement in writing accuracy. Although teacher feedback on grammar was expected in the Thai educational context, its over-emphasis would not bring revision changes closer to the text demand. Furthermore, the findings on students' revisions suggest that for global errors, detailed feedback on what and how to revise is necessary for inexperienced EFL writers' successful revisions.

Although the study partly showed the preliminary success of a teacher' modified feedback strategies to help students write essays in her specific teaching context in Thailand, further research is needed in order to explore effective ways to help Thai students improve their English writing, which is reported to be a chronic problem (Chamcharatsri, 2010; Puengpipattrakul, 2013). First, a replication of this study with a greater emphasis on content in other settings would provide more insights into whether or not this feedback practice works in other Thai educational contexts with their practical constraints. Also, studies on the effects of individual differences regarding their proficiency levels, goals, attitudes, beliefs and motivation on feedback revisions are necessary for teachers to best individualize their WCF. Finally, as the goal of feedback is to train students to become independent writers, another important area of investigation is the role of feedback in encouraging autonomous writing skills.

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As feedback provision is the most time-consuming and challenging part of teachers' profession, identifying and applying the most effective types of WCF in their own contexts is important. It is generally accepted that the effectiveness of any teaching method involves various contributing factors, such as students' proficiency levels of English, their feedback preferences, their educational and cultural backgrounds, teachers' expertise and most importantly the specific learning and teaching contexts. In fact, as claimed by Ellis (2009, p. 106) that there is no "corrective feedback recipe", teachers need to adjust their feedback strategies to best suit specific learners in their specific institutional, classroom and task contexts.

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APPENDIX A

CHECKLIST FOR ALL ESSAYS

(Adapted from *Writing Academic English by* Oshima and Hogue (2006)

I. Organization

1. Does the essay have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion?

Introduction

2. Do the general statements
· give background information?
· attract the reader's attention?
3. Does the thesis statement state a clearly focused main idea for the whole essay?

Body

4. Does each body paragraph have
· a clearly stated topic sentence with a main idea?
· good development with adequate supporting details (facts, example, or quotation)?
· unity (one idea per paragraph)
· coherence (logical organization, transition words, and consistent pronouns)?

Conclusion

5. Does the conclusion
· restate your thesis or summarize your main points?
· give your final thoughts on the subject of your essay?

II. Grammar and mechanics

(Use the error codes in Writing 1-2)

III. Content and discourse

6. Is the content of the essay sufficient and interesting?
7. Is the language used in this essay appropriate for academic discourse?
8. Do you think the readers will be convinced?
9. Will the readers agree/disagree with your thesis statement?
10. Is there anything you like/dislike or want to change in this essay?

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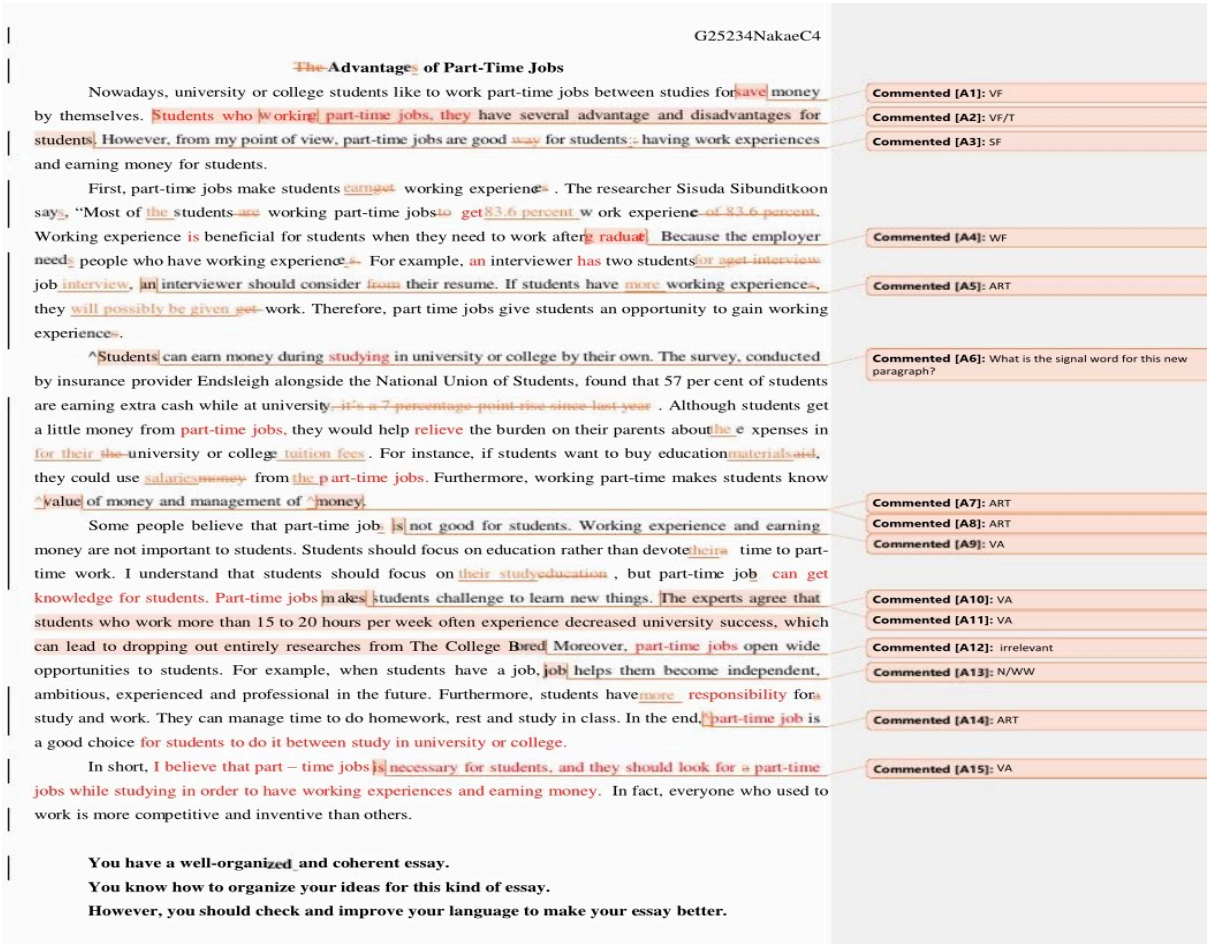
APPENDIX B

A SAMPLE OF TEACHER FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING



G25234NakaeC4

~~The~~ Advantage~~s~~ of Part-Time Jobs

Nowadays, university or college students like to work part-time jobs between studies for save money by themselves. Students who working part-time jobs, they have several advantage and disadvantages for students. However, from my point of view, part-time jobs are good ~~way~~ for students : having work experiences and earning money for students.

First, part-time jobs make students ~~earnget~~ working experience~~s~~ . The researcher Sisuda Sibunditkoon says, "Most of the students ~~are~~ working part-time jobs~~to~~ get 83.6 percent w ork experience ~~of 83.6 percent~~. Working experience is beneficial for students when they need to work after~~g~~ raduate. Because the employer need~~s~~ people who have working experience~~s~~. For example, an interviewer has two students ~~for get interview~~ job interview, an interviewer should consider ~~from~~ their resume. If students have more working experience~~s~~, they will possibly be given ~~get~~ work. Therefore, part time jobs give students an opportunity to gain working experience~~s~~.

^Students can earn money during studying in university or college by their own. The survey, conducted by insurance provider Endsleigh alongside the National Union of Students, found that 57 per cent of students are earning extra cash while at university ~~, it's a 7 percentage point rise since last year~~ . Although students get a little money from part-time jobs, they would help relieve the burden on their parents about ~~the~~ e xpenses in for their ~~the~~ university or college tuition fees . For instance, if students want to buy education materials~~aid~~, they could use salaries~~money~~ from the p art-time jobs. Furthermore, working part-time makes students know ^value of money and management of ^money.

Some people believe that part-time job is not good for students. Working experience and earning money are not important to students. Students should focus on education rather than devote ~~their~~ time to part-time work. I understand that students should focus on ~~their study~~education , but part-time job can get knowledge for students. Part-time jobs m akes students challenge to learn new things. The experts agree that students who work more than 15 to 20 hours per week often experience decreased university success, which can lead to dropping out entirely researches from The College Bred. Moreover, part-time jobs open wide opportunities to students. For example, when students have a job, job helps them become independent, ambitious, experienced and professional in the future. Furthermore, students have ~~more~~ responsibility for ~~a~~ study and work. They can manage time to do homework, rest and study in class. In the end, ^part-time job is a good choice for students to do it between study in university or college.

In short, I believe that part – time jobs is necessary for students, and they should look for ~~a~~ part-time jobs while studying in order to have working experiences and earning money. In fact, everyone who used to work is more competitive and inventive than others.

You have a well-organized and coherent essay.
You know how to organize your ideas for this kind of essay.
However, you should check and improve your language to make your essay better.

Commented [A1]: VF
Commented [A2]: VF/T
Commented [A3]: SF
Commented [A4]: WF
Commented [A5]: ART
Commented [A6]: What is the signal word for this new paragraph?
Commented [A7]: ART
Commented [A8]: ART
Commented [A9]: VA
Commented [A10]: VA
Commented [A11]: VA
Commented [A12]: irrelevant
Commented [A13]: N/WW
Commented [A14]: ART
Commented [A15]: VA

APPENDIX C

IINTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think feedback is necessary for you to improve your essays?
2. Did you find the feedback provided in your essays useful?
3. What was the most useful part of the feedback process?
4. Which feedback forms were easy for you to revise?
5. Why did you sometimes ignore the feedback provided at the end of the essays?

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