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Teacher Written Feedback: Learner Preferences, Perceptions, and Teacher Reflections

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Teacher written feedback on student compositions has received tremendous attention in second language (L2) writing research. Notwithstanding the importance of understanding both teachers' and students' perspectives on the feedback process, much of the feedback research has only looked into one-side of the story – adopting either the teacher's or the student's perspective. The current study is an attempt to look into both sides of the story by examining the types of written feedback that students prefer, the extent to which students' preferences and teachers' actual feedback practice overlap, and the extent to which student perceptions of teacher feedback coordinate teacher self-reflections on their feedback practice. Three English composition classes (3 teachers and 46 students) at a university participated in this study. It analyzed student and teacher data from questionnaires and teacher written feedback on student compositions. The results showed that students' preference for feedback on global and local issues varied across the three composition classes. This is partly a consequence of how students perceived the type of feedback that their teachers practiced. Teacher self-reflection on and student perception of teacher written-feedback generally coordinated. These findings are discussed in light of how contextual factors affect learner perception of teacher written feedback and underscore the need for examining students' reactions to feedback and teacher self-reflection.

[written feedback/teacher and learner perception]

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing interest in the use of peer feedback and teacher oral response, teacher written feedback on student compositions continues to play a central role in most

second language (L2) writing classes. Consequently, over the last decades, substantial body of L2 research into teacher written feedback has been conducted. Researchers have looked into teacher written feedback from a variety of perspectives: one of these has examined the effects of different types of feedback on revision or on L2 writing skills (Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2004; Goldstein, 2006); another looks into how teachers practice feedback on student compositions (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Zamel, 1985); and a third has set out to investigate learner preferences and reactions to teacher feedback (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

Interestingly, however, there are only a few studies which focus on both learner and teacher perspectives. Writing teachers devote a great deal of time and effort to written feedback on students' writing. Nevertheless, teachers may not be aware of how much feedback they actually provide to local errors (i.e., grammar, spelling, and punctuations) and global errors (i.e., content, ideas, and organization). As importantly, they may not be aware of how learners, in fact, perceive their feedback (Montgomery & Baker, 2007), and of whether their feedback is congruent with learner preferences. Teachers want their feedback to be effective. But, this goal can only be effectively attained if teachers have an accurate understanding of how they practice feedback, how this is perceived by students, and how their feedback meets students' needs. Students' reactions are affected by the context since feedback occurs between teachers and students in particular situational and inter-personal contexts (Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2008).

In light of the above, the purpose of the current study is to examine (1) what types of written feedback students prefer to receive, (2) the extent to which student preference and teacher actual feedback practice overlap, and (3) the extent to which student perceptions of teacher feedback coordinate teacher self-reflections on their feedback practice in three different composition classrooms at a university. This paper will first review previous studies on teacher written feedback to provide the background for the current research, and then it will present the methods, results and a discussion, followed by the conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Teacher Feedback Practices

The types of teacher written feedback on student compositions can largely be divided into two kinds, feedback on global errors and feedback on local errors. The former is often referred to as content feedback and the latter as form feedback. Those who advocate a process writing approach suggest that teachers pay more attention to content in a preliminary draft before attending to form in later drafts (Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). It

is assumed that emphasizing the accuracy of local issues in the earlier stages of the writing process may inhibit learners, consequently hindering learners from considering the global aspects of their compositions (Campbell, 1998). But, surprisingly, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that providing content and form feedback separately is more effective than providing content and form feedback simultaneously. As a matter of fact, Fathman and Whalley (1990) and Ashwell (2000) reported that these diverse approaches do not actually offer different benefits. Even though it is still inconclusive whether the sequential approach (i.e., content comes first) is more effective than the simultaneous approach, thus far the suggestion that attending to both global and local aspects of compositions is important has been deemed fairly reasonable.

However, despite the consensus that both global and local feedback are equally important, many studies have forcefully debated whether grammar error correction is appropriate for writing courses (Truscott, 1996; Zamel, 1985). For instance, in the analysis of 105 ESL student texts, Zamel (1985) found that ESL writing teachers provided arbitrary corrections and inconsistent responses to student compositions and rarely offered content-specific comments. Zamel advised teachers to "hold in abeyance [their] reflex-like reactions to surface-level concerns and give priority to meaning" (p. 96). The inefficacy of correction to local errors has been backed by other studies (Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Truscott, 1996, 1999). Among others, Truscott's 1996 study can be considered a most challenging study against the role of grammar correction: "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328). Truscott made this strong claim based on his meta-analysis of research on the effectiveness of grammar correction, which provoked a fierce debate. Ferris (1999), for instance, conducted a critical review of Truscott's (1996) study arguing that his assertion is premature and overstated because he failed to clearly define 'grammar correction' in his analysis and because he did not consider contextual differences. Ferris' contention is that a great deal more research is needed before it is possible to claim that error correction should be either abandoned or embraced.

The issues surrounding the role of grammar correction have been dealt with in many studies (Chandler, 2003; Polio, 1997). Although some research has proved that grammar correction has no effects, there are many practical reasons for writing teachers to keep attending to grammar errors. Admittedly, grammar errors are an obvious obstacle for L2 writers, and this makes teachers feel compelled to provide correction. Furthermore, in certain circumstances, the formal accuracy of the written product can play an important role. For instance, many survey studies found that at universities subject teachers have little tolerance for grammar errors in ESL students' written works and that these can affect their overall grading of papers (Janopoulos, 1992). More importantly, students expect to receive comments from their teachers on their grammar errors and they may feel frustrated

if this does not happen (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991). These studies provide teachers with every reason to believe in the need for grammar error correction.

2. Student Preferences

ESL students value the importance of teacher-written feedback on their compositions and rate it more highly than peer or oral feedback (Ferris, 2006; Leki, 1991, 2006). Studies on students' preferences for and perception of types of written feedback often show their preferences for teacher feedback on local errors over global errors. For instance, based on the survey of 217 students in university language classes, Cohen (1987) revealed that students believed that teachers should provide more feedback on local issues than on global issues. Ferris (1995) also reported a very similar result. However, this does not mean that students are ignorant of teacher feedback on global issues. Students value feedback on content and on their ideas in conjunction with feedback on local errors (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996). Given that it is often reported that teachers pay more attention to local issues than global issues (Ferris, 2006), teachers need to be encouraged to provide balanced feedback on both global and local errors. Uneven focus may mislead students to believe that local issues are more important than global issues or vice-versa. In this regard, it is important for teachers to be aware of how much they focus on each area.

Another point of interest in the studies on learner perspectives is whether learners prefer direct or indirect feedback. Teachers can make feedback explicit by pointing out what has gone wrong and providing the correct word or form. But they can also make feedback implicit by hinting that something is wrong when they underline, circle, or code students' errors. Studies examining learner preference for the type of feedback have reported conflicting findings. For instance, Radecki and Swales (1988) found that students wanted to receive explicit error correction. Lee (2008) also showed a similar finding based on the survey conducted in secondary classrooms. Regardless of the proficiency level, students wanted teachers to take a more active role in providing correction. On the other hand, Hyland (2001) and Saito (1994) suggest that students preferred indirect correction to direct correction. It is unfeasible to generalize on the type of feedback that learners prefer since it is mainly affected by learner motivations, proficiency levels, ages, and different classroom contexts (Lee, 2008).

3. Matches between Teacher and Student Perceptions

A mismatch between teacher perceptions/intentions and learner perceptions

/interpretation of oral feedback has been reported in many L2 studies. Teacher written feedback is not an exceptional case. Two studies on teachers' written feedback have investigated a misfit between teacher perceptions and learner perceptions. Cohen and Covalcanti (1990) revealed the gap between what teachers believe they are providing and what students perceive in three different contexts – an EFL institute, an EFL university, and an L1 writing class. On the one hand, while the teacher expressed that she emphasized content and organization, the students perceived that she focused on grammar and mechanics. On the other hand, Montgomery and Baker (2007) showed that teachers' self-assessments and student perceptions of teacher-written feedback agreed to a considerable extent on the amount of feedback that was provided for such categories as ideas and content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. However, when the teachers' self-assessment was compared to their feedback they actually provided to students, a discrepancy was found: "teachers tended to underestimate the amount of feedback they gave on local issues…and to overestimate the amount of feedback they gave on global issues" (p. 92). Teachers' awareness of how students perceive their written feedback and how their self-reflection of feedback practice and student perception coordinate will help them provide feedback in an effective way.

4. Research Questions

As reviewed above, in order to know students' needs and make feedback effective, it is vital to know what students want from teachers and how they perceive teacher feedback. In addition, for the purpose of providing balanced feedback (i.e., focusing on both global and local issues), teachers need to be aware of the amount of feedback they have provided and on what aspects they have focused. In light of this, the present study raised three research questions.

1) What types of written feedback do students prefer to receive?
2) To what extent do student preferences overlap with teacher practices of feedback?
3) To what extent do student perceptions of teacher feedback match teacher self-reflections to their feedback practice?

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Three different groups of subjects enrolled at a university in Daegu, Korea were invited

to participate in the study. Class A is an English composition class consisting of English education major sophomores. Class B is a freshman writing class offered for the students enrolled at International College. Class C is a mandatory course offered for the students in the College of Arts and Humanities. The classes share the commonality that all three are taught by native speakers (NSs) of English (one female and two male) who have taught EFL writing classes for several years. Each class meets twice a week (once for a one-hour class, and the other for a two-hour class). In all of the classes, the students are asked to revise their first drafts after receiving the teacher's feedback and to resubmit the revised version. Then, the teacher provides feedback on the final draft. The three teachers provide both feedback on local and global errors and make comments on the content of the students' compositions. More detailed information on how feedback is being delivered is discussed in Results session with the analyses of feedback and surveys.

While the classes share these commonalities (e.g., native English teachers and class procedures), they differ in several ways. First, while Class A is an advanced English composition class (taking an introductory English class is a prerequisite), Class B and Class C are introductory composition classes. Second, it can be presumed that Class A and Class B are composed of more advanced learners of English than Class C: students in Class A are majoring in English education, and students in Class B are freshmen enrolled in International College which requires that applicants receive a high score in the English entrance exam for universities. By contrast, students in Class C do not major in an English-related subject. Taking these differences into account, it can be said that Class C has the lowest English proficiency level of the three groups.

TABLE 1
Information on Participants

	Class A	Class B	Class C
Teachers	Female NS	Male NS	Male NS
Teaching experiences in Korea	4 years	4 years	8 years
Number of Students	13 (11 female; 2 male)	17 (10 Female; 7 male)	16 (9 male; 7 male)
Grades	Sophomore	Freshman	Sophomores, Juniors, & Seniors

2. Procedures

1) Student and Teacher Questionnaires

The student questionnaire was composed of two main parts (Part A and Part B). Part A was designed to examine students' general preferences for teacher written feedback and the questions were partly adopted from Lee (2008). In Part A, the students were asked to choose their preferences for teacher feedback in four aspects including the areas of feedback (global vs. local issues) and the types of feedback (explicit vs. implicit error correction). In addition, they were asked about the teacher's role in reading their compositions (see Appendix A for a detailed description). Part B was designed to investigate the students' perceptions of teacher written feedback they received from the teachers and it was adopted from Montgomery and Baker (2007). In Part B, the students were asked to decide how much of each type of feedback (i.e., organization, content/ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics) they received from the teacher throughout the semester. In order to separately examine students' perception of feedback on their first and final drafts, the students were asked to approximate the amount of feedback given on the first and final drafts for each type of feedback (e.g., "How much of your teachers' written-feedback on your essay is about organization?). A Likert scale was used with the choices of 'none,', 'a little,' 'some,' and 'a lot' as used in Montgomery and Baker (2007). For instance, if the students thought that the feedback provided on their essay was mostly about grammar, they marked 'a lot' for the category of 'grammar' (see Appendix for a detailed description).

Teachers were asked to self-evaluate their written feedback using similar questions to those of the student questionnaire (Part B). The same Likert scales were used to examine teacher reflections on their feedback. The teachers were asked to decide how much feedback they provided for each category (e.g., how many of your comments and corrections involve grammar?).

The student and teacher questionnaires were distributed at the end of the semester in order to obtain a general picture of the teacher written feedback provided throughout the semester. The directions and explanations for the student questionnaire were given in Korean by the researcher to help the students clearly understand each question. The students were allowed to ask any questions related to the questionnaire and to spend as much time as was necessary completing the survey. The average time each class spent on the questionnaire was 15 minutes.

2) Teacher Feedback

In order to compare the feedback that was actually provided by the teacher with the answers obtained from the student and teacher questionnaires, teacher written feedback on students' compositions was examined. Compositions from 9 students from each class (total 27 students) were collected and analyzed. From each class, 9 students' first and final drafts

(total 54 essays) were selected. Students' compositions from 3 different groups of grades (i.e., A+/A, B+/B, and C+/C) were chosen as representatives of the students' compositions. This decision was made in order to obtain a general picture of the teacher feedback behavior irrespective of different student proficiency levels within the same classroom.

3. Data Analysis

1) Student Questionnaires

The questionnaire data were subject to SPSS analysis, yielding mainly descriptive data. For Part A, the category that the students marked for each question was examined. For instance, in order to examine the students' preferences for grammar error correction strategies, the students were asked to choose one out of six strategies, and the number marked on each one was tallied. For Part B, the number of students who checked on the given categories was counted.

2) Teacher Feedback

The number of corrections and comments made on each composition was counted. Each occurrence of teacher feedback was categorized by using the same categories applied in the student and teacher questionnaires (i.e., organization, content/ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics). Comments on organization include such feedback as "good transitions" and "excellent thesis statement"; content/ideas comments focus on the students' ideas such as "good thoughts" and "good supporting ideas"; grammar corrections include any feedback that points out incorrect grammar (e.g., providing a correct form or pointing out a source of error without providing a correct form); feedback on vocabulary contains comments such as "wrong word choice," "nice words," and provision of appropriate words; mechanics includes corrections for spelling, punctuation, and formatting.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Student Preferences for Teacher Written Feedback

In order to examine the students' preferences, their responses to Part A of the student questionnaires were examined. As Table 2 shows, the students in both Class A and Class

B wanted their teachers to emphasize content/ideas (46% and 41% respectively) the most followed by organization (31% and 29% respectively) and language (15% and 24% respectively). By contrast, the students in Class C wanted their teacher to focus on language (56%) the most rather than on content/ideas (25%) and organization (19%). That the students in Class A and Class B wanted to receive more feedback on global issues than on local issues was somewhat surprising. A great deal of previous research points out that learners are especially interested in receiving feedback on language issues, even though they value teachers' comments on global issues (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991).

Class A's and Class B's preference for teacher feedback on global issues over local issues can be accounted for in at least two ways. First, the given topics for the compositions might have affected students' preferences. For Class A, most of the composition topics provided throughout the semester were related to their major, English education, such as 'motivation,' 'learning new words,' and 'content-based learning.' Moreover, their writing teacher is an instructor in English education. The students might have expected to benefit from the teacher's expertise as she commented on their ideas. In Leki's (2006) study, L2 graduate students also valued teacher feedback particularly as a means to help them develop disciplinary literacy. The students in Class B mostly wrote argumentative essays throughout the semester: they wrote four essays and all of them deal with controversial issues (e.g., biological parents vs. adoptive parents; stem cell research). The students might have expected to confirm whether the structure of their argument was appropriate or not by receiving feedback on content and organization. On the other hand, the topics provided in Class C were relatively neutral (e.g., the importance of green technology; my room). In addition, as briefly noted above, Class A and Class B are considered to be more advanced classes than Class C. Learner proficiency has been considered a factor affecting learner preference for teacher feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

TABLE 2
Which Area Would You Like Your Teacher to Emphasize?

Student feedback preferences	Class A	Class B	Class C
Organization	4 (31%)	5 (29%)	3 (19%)
Content/Ideas	6 (46%)	7 (41%)	4 (25%)
Language (grammar, vocabulary, sentence pattern)	2 (15%)	4 (24%)	9 (56%)
Others	1 (8%)	1 (6%)	0
None of the above	0	0	0
Total	13	17	16

Where the type of error correction is concerned, the students in all three groups prefer Type D (i.e., "underline/circle my errors, categorize them, and provide correction for me") (see Table 3). Learner preference for the type of error correction has been mixed in L2 writing studies. While the preference for overt error correction has been reported (Lee, 2008; Radecki & Swales, 1988), other studies reveal that learners prefer covert error correction to overt error correction, where they receive clues and play a more active role in the feedback process (Saito, 1994).

TABLE 3

Which of the Following Strategy Would You Like Your Teacher to Use When Responding to Errors in Your Grammar?

Student feedback preferences		Class A	Class B	Class C
A.	Underline/circle my errors	0	1 (5.5%)	0
B.	Underline/circle my errors and provide corrections	3 (23%)	2 (12%)	2 (13%)
C.	Underline/circle my errors and categorize them	2 (15%)	3 (18%)	0
D.	Underline/circle my errors, categorize them, and provide corrections for me	7 (54%)	10 (59%)	14 (87%)
E.	Give me a hint about my errors	0	0	0
F.	Give me a hint about my errors and categorize the errors for me	1 (8%)	1 (5.5%)	0
G.	None of the above methods	0	0	0

The students' strong preference for overt feedback that the current study observed is somewhat related to student perception of the role of teachers. One of the questions in Part A of the student questionnaire asked the students what role the teacher plays in reading their compositions: they were asked to decide the extent to which they considered the teacher to be a 'judge' of their work and the extent to which they considered the teacher to be a 'reader' interested in their ideas. As seen in Table 4, in most cases the students in all of the three classes perceived teachers as a judge (84.6% in Class A; 76.5% in Class B; 81.3% in Class C), and only one student in Class B always perceived the teacher as an interested reader. About half of the students almost never considered the teacher as an interested reader.

TABLE 4

Student Perceptions of Teachers' Role

Teacher's role	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost never

Teacher Written Feedback

EC (N=13)	Judge	11 (84.6%)	2 (15.4%)	0	0
	Interested reader	0	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.7%)	6 (46.2%)
IC (N=17)	Judge	13 (76.5%)	3 (17.6%)	1 (5.9%)	0
	Interested Reader	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.9%)	7 (41.1%)	7 (41.1%)
AC (N=16)	Judge	13 (81.3%)	3 (18.7%)	0	0
	Interested reader	0	3 (18.8%)	5 (31.2%)	8 (50%)

The students' perception of the teachers' role seem to be closely related to the teacher's approach to feedback: teacher-centered approach. The teacher was a feedback giver and the students were passive recipients. The students were rarely given a chance to make an attempt to actively solve their own problems. This might have rendered the students passive and reliant on the teacher's feedback in revising their compositions (Lee, 2008). This seems to lead the students to conceive of the teachers as 'judges' or 'editors' rather than 'readers'; as a result, the students felt reluctant to take an active role in revising their compositions, asking the teachers to provide correct forms instead of solving the problems on their own.

2. Teacher Actual Practice of Written Feedback and Learner Preferences

For the purpose of examining the teachers' actual practice of written feedback, the feedback provided for the students' compositions (2 essays from 9 students in each class; total 54 essays) was analyzed. Frequency counts were totaled for each category of feedback - organization, content/ideas, language (grammar and vocabulary) and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) - on each draft of the two compositions from each student. As in Table 5, the teacher in Class A provided 460 feedback (25.6 for an essay on average); out of the 460, 29 (6.3%) were for organization; 34 (7.4%) for content/ideas; 347 (75.4%) for language; 50 for mechanics (10.9%). In Class B, a total of 342 feedback (19 feedback for an essay on average) was offered, and out of the 342, 25 feedback (7.3%) was provided for organization, 23 (6.7%) for content/ideas, 253 (74%) for language, and 41 (12%) for mechanics. The teacher in Class C also put more emphasis on language than on the other parts: a total of 466 feedback was given (25.9 for an essay on average), and 35 feedback (7.6%) was given to organization, 51 (10.5%) to content/ideas, 325 (69.7%) to language, and 55 (11.9%) to mechanics.

TABLE 5
Frequency Counts of Teacher Written Feedback

Teacher written feedback	Class A			Class B			Class C		
	First	Final	Total	First	Final	Total	First	Final	Total
Organization	17 (6)	12 (6.8)	29 (6.3)	16 (7.2)	9 (7.5)	25 (7.3)	22 (7.5)	13 (7.6)	35 (7.6)
Content /Ideas	20 (7)	14 (8)	34 (7.4)	12 (5.4)	11 (9.2)	23 (6.7)	27 (9.2)	24 (14)	51 (10.9)
Language	214 (75.4)	133 (75.6)	347 (75.4)	165 (74.3)	88 (73.3)	253 (74)	209 (71)	116 (67.4)	325 (69.7)
Mechanics	33 (11.6)	17 (9.6)	50 (10.9)	29 (13.1)	12 (10)	41 (12)	36 (12.3)	19 (11)	55 (11.8)
Total	284	176	460	222	120	342	294	172	466

(Note: the number in a parenthesis is a percentage of each cell)

In terms of the distribution of written feedback, a very similar pattern was observed across the three teachers, as is presented below. The primary focus of the teacher feedback was on language including grammar and vocabulary for both the first and final drafts.

EM: Language > Others > Content/Ideas > Organization (1st draft)
Language > Others > Content/ideas > Organization (Final)
IC: Language > Others > Organization > Content/Ideas (1st draft)
Language > Others > Content/ideas > Organization (Final)
RC: Language > Others> Content/Ideas > Organization (1st draft)
Language > Content/ideas > Others > Organization (Final)

For the purpose of comparing teacher actual practice of feedback with student preference, the students' preferences presented in Table 2 are summarized below:

EM: Content/ideas > Organization > Language > Others
IC: Content/ideas > Organization > Language > Others
RC: Language > Content/ideas > Organization > Others

It may not be productive to compare the amount of feedback on global issues with the

feedback on local errors since global issues usually encompass more than a sentence or even a paragraph. In other words, it could be logically assumed that there would be less feedback for global issues than for local issues. However, even if we take this into account, it is quite evident that in all three classes the teachers' feedback largely focused on language. In contrast, Class A and Class B wanted to receive comments on content/ideas mostly followed by organization. This result was expected since the teacher's feedback had largely focused on language (i.e., local issues). In addition, as previously noted, the composition topics that were assigned might have increased a need for teacher feedback on global issues. In Class C, on the other hand, the students still wanted more feedback on language than feedback on content/ideas or organization, even though the teacher had placed more emphasis on language than on global issues (Lee, 2008). This will be discussed in light of student perception of teacher written feedback.

Teacher written comments on global issues, especially content/ideas, help students understand how their teachers are reading their writing (Goldstein, 2006). This allows students to feel that their teachers are interested in what is expressed in their writing other than whether language form is correct. In other words, students may be able to consider the teacher a reader not just a judge who corrects their grammar errors in their writing process. This shift of learner perception of the teacher's role may enable students to take an active role in their writing process.

Table 6 shows that when error feedback strategies were examined, all of the three teachers used mainly a type of overt error correction (i.e., strategy B; providing corrections for errors). As noted previously, the students mostly favored Type D, and this was rarely practiced by the teachers. However, given that both strategies are direct error correction strategies which provide corrections, the students' preferences seemed to be satisfied. The teacher in Class A used a very different and interesting strategy on the students' final drafts. She usually provided feedback on final drafts by email, and she often corrected the students' errors without marking anything (e.g., no underline and circle). Instead, she asked the students to write what they had learned from the feedback for the final drafts. This strategy cannot be easily classified under any of the existing categories.

TABLE 6

Grammar Error Correction Strategies

Error feedback strategies	Class A (N =297)	Class B (N=241)	Class C (N=275)
A. Underline/circle the errors	31 (10.5%)	24 (10%)	33 (12%)
B. Underline/circle the errors and provide corrections	188 (63.3%)	176 (73%)	195 (70.9%)

C. Underline/circle the errors and categorize them	23 (7.7%)	22 (9.1%)	39 (14.2%)
D. Underline/circle the errors, categorize them, and provide corrections	0	19 (7.9%)	0
E. Give a hint about the errors by putting a mark in the margin	0	0	8 (2.9%)
F. Give a hint about the errors by categorizing them in the margin	0	0	0
G. None of the above methods	55 (18.5%)	0	0

3. Student Perceptions vs. Teacher Self-Reflections

The third research question addressed the match between the teacher self-assessments and student perceptions of written feedback. Table 7 shows the frequency of the teacher feedback obtained from the student questionnaire on the first draft.

TABLE 7
Student Perception of Teacher Feedback to the First Drafts

Frequency of comments		Organization	Content/ Ideas	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanics
Class A (N= 13)	A lot	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
	Some	6 (46%)	4 (31%)	8 (62%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)
	Few	3 (23%)	7 (54%)	2 (15%)	6 (46%)	7 (54%)
	None	1 (8%0	0	0	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
Class B (N= 17)	A lot	5 (29%)	4 (23%)	4 (23%)	1 (6%)	3 (18%)
	Some	11 (65%)	9 (53%)	10 (59%)	6 (35%)	7 (41%)
	Few	1 (6%)	3 (18%)	3 (18%)	9 (53%)	7 (41%)
	None	0	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	0
Class C (N= 16)	A lot	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	4 (25%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)
	Some	8 (50%)	5 (31%)	9 (56%)	4 (25%)	2 (12%)
	Few	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	8 (50%)	10 (63%)
	None	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	1 (6%)

Some discrepancies were found when the students' responses were compared with the teachers' responses. In Class A, 6 students out of the 13 students (46%) perceived that they received 'some' feedback on 'organization' while the teacher reported that she provided 'a lot' of feedback on 'organization.' Only three students (23%) perceived that they received 'a lot' of feedback. For 'content/ideas,' 7 students (54%) answered that 'few' feedback was provided; however, the teacher reported that she provided 'a lot' of feedback. Only 2

students (15%) responded that they received 'a lot' of feedback on 'content/ideas.' As for the feedback on vocabulary, the teacher reflected that she gave 'some' feedback while 4 students (31%) perceived that they received 'some' feedback and 6 students (46%) felt that they received 'few' feedback. The teacher tended to reflect that she provided more feedback than the students had perceived on organization, content/ideas, and vocabulary. In the other two areas, grammar and mechanics, teacher reflection and student perception overlapped.

Surprisingly, for Class B, student perception and teacher reflection presented an agreement in all of the areas. Many students reported that they thought they received 'some' feedback on organization, content/ideas, and grammar (65%, 53%, and 59% respectively) and the teacher also reflected that he provided 'some' feedback on these areas. In the other two areas, many students and the teacher both perceived that 'few' feedback for 'vocabulary' and 'mechanics' was provided.

In Class C, the students and the teacher perceived differently the amount of feedback provided on content/ideas and grammar. As for content/ideas, the teacher reflected that he offered 'some' feedback, but many students (7 out of 16; 44%) perceived that the teacher provide 'a lot' of feedback. As opposed to content/ideas, more than half of students (9 out of 16; 56%) perceived that they received 'some' feedback for grammar, while the teacher reflected that he provided 'a lot' of feedback. In the other three areas, the teacher assessment matches a majority of the students' perceptions with – both reporting 'some.'

This study also examined the extent of the match between the students' perceptions and the teachers' reflection in the final drafts. Table 8 shows the frequency of the students' responses obtained from the student questionnaires.

TABLE 8

Students' Perception of Teacher Feedback to Final Drafts

Frequency of comments		Organization	Content/ Ideas	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanics
Class A (N= 13)	A lot	0	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
	Some	7 (54%)	4 (30%)	8 (62%)	4 (30%)	2 (15%)
	Few	3 (23%)	7 (54%)	3 (23%)	7 (55%)	8 (62%)
	None	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	0	0	2 (15%)
Class B (N= 17)	A lot	4 (24%)	5 (29%)	6 (35%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)
	Some	10 (59%)	9 (53%)	9 (53%)	9 (53%)	6 (35%)
	Few	3 (17%)	2 (12%)	2 (12%)	6 (35%)	7 (42%)
	None	0	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	1 (6%)
Class C (N=	A lot	4 (25%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	0
	Some	8 (50%)	9 (56%)	6 (37%)	4 (25%)	4 (25%)
	Few	3 (19%)	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	9 (56%)

16)	None	1 (6%)	0	0	1 (6%)	3 (19%)

As was practiced for the first draft, the students' perceptions and the teachers' reflections were compared in order to examine the match between these two. In Class A, the students' perceptions and the teacher's reflections overlapped in all of the areas except for one category, vocabulary: the teacher assessed that she gave 'some' feedback while more than half of the students (7 out of 17; 55%) perceived that 'few' feedback was offered. The students and the teacher in Class B also showed a match for most of the areas except for 'organization': the teacher reflected that 'few' feedback was practiced, but the students felt that 'some' feedback was provided. In the case of Class C, a match between student perception and teacher reflection was observed for all of the areas. Overall, student perception and teacher self-reflection showed a fairly good match.

It is neither reasonable nor logical to expect a complete overlap between student perception and teacher self-reflection. Students' perceptions can largely be related to their preferences and expectations. In other words, students will perceive that they do not receive enough feedback if they prefer to have more of it even if abundant feedback is being provided. For instance, the teacher's feedback in Class A primarily focused on language; however, the students felt that they received 'some' feedback for 'grammar' in the first draft and 'few' feedback in the final draft, which led them to desire more feedback on language. Likewise, teachers' reflections can be affected by what they consider important about providing feedback. Montgomery and Baker (2007), for instance, found that teachers tended to overestimate the amount of their feedback on global issues (i.e., teachers believed that they provided more feedback to global issues than they actually did). This seems to be related to their training which focuses on global issues like 'organization.' A very similar finding was observed in the current study. The teacher in Class A showed her concerns about global issues in student compositions while answering a question concerning her feedback strategy in the teacher survey. This was reflected in her self-assessment: she reflected that she provided 'a lot' of feedback on both 'organization' and 'content/ideas' although the majority of her students did not perceive this in the same way. In a very similar vein, the teacher in Class C noted in the survey that language did not occupy a large portion (2 out of 10) of his assessment of students' compositions. In this appreciation he manifested his self-reflection: he reported that he provided 'some' feedback on grammar while his students felt that they received 'a lot' of grammar feedback.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study examined students' preferences and perceptions of teachers' written-feedback to L2 compositions in three different composition classes. In addition, attempts were made to compare (1) student preference with teacher actual practice of feedback and to compare (2) student perception with teacher self-reflection on feedback practice. The main findings can be summarized as follows. First, the students' preferences for teacher written feedback on global and local issues varied from classroom to classroom (Lee, 2008). Contextual factors such as given composition topics and learner proficiency are presumed to generate the differences. It was also revealed that the students expected to have more feedback on areas which the teachers had not focused on or on areas which they believed got little attention regardless of whether teacher feedback was actually being practiced on these areas or not. In the current study, the teachers tended to focus more on local issues than on global issues. The students preferred overt error correction to covert error correction, and the teachers mainly used overt error correction strategies. A fairly good overlap was found between student perception and teacher self-reflection.

The study found that teacher-centered approaches to feedback practice are likely to render students passive and reliant. Student attitudes toward the feedback practice can be altered mainly by requiring them to play a more active role in the writing process. For instance, students will be able to take a proactive role by engaging in self/peer evaluation, and/or by being given an opportunity to tell teachers what they want from teacher feedback. It is true that practicing this is not as feasible as it can seem. In order to perform effective self/peer evaluation, students need to be trained (Kim, 2009; Prochaska, 2005). In addition, due to cultural traits (i.e., a teacher is an authority figure and students tend to have cultural inhibitions about expressing what they want to teachers), it may take time and efforts to lead students to express their opinions about teacher feedback. Nevertheless, helping students to become independent writers is one of the major goals of writing teachers. In this regard, it is a teacher's responsibility to accustom students to active participation in the writing process by talking about their compositions in the feedback process.

Writing teachers spend a tremendous amount of time providing feedback on their students' compositions. As discussed previously, students' responses to feedback are largely affected by contextual factors such as composition topics, learner proficiency, and the feedback approach the teacher uses. Without understanding what students expect from teacher feedback and how they perceive teacher feedback, teachers may run the risk of continuously providing feedback that is counter-productive, wasting their time and energy. Likewise, teachers need to reflect on how they are performing feedback practices in order to achieve self-realization. Through such attempts, it is possible to discern the differences and similarities between student perception and teacher self-reflection. We cannot expect that they will overlap all the time. However, if there is a big difference, it can be taken as a

red light that signals a misunderstanding between teachers and students.

Some major limitations need to be noted to conclude the study. First, following previous research, the current study used a Likert scale in order to measure the amount of feedback (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Although this method is frequently used, the system of categorization for the amounts of feedback (a lot, some, few, and none) can be very subjective since the feedback categories lack clear numerical ranges (e.g., 2-3: some and 4-6 a lot). Second, the study solely relied on quantitative data to measure learner perception. Employing qualitative data (i.e., interviews with students) has been suggested as an insightful way of studying learner perception). In a future study, it would be necessary to use various forms of data collection. In addition, the study assumed learner proficiency levels based on the characteristics of the classes and the students' backgrounds. A more accurate standard needs to be employed to assess the role that learner proficiency levels play in how students react to teacher written feedback. It will also be worth examining how learner preference and perception differ according to learner proficiency levels within the class.

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APPENDIX

Student Questionnaire*

Part A

1. Which of the following area would you like your teacher to emphasize? You can

Teacher Written Feedback

tick only ONE answer.

Organization	
Content/Ideas	
Language (grammar and vocabulary)	
Others (mechanics: spelling, punctuation)	
None of the above	

2. Which of the following strategy would you like your teacher to use when responding to errors in your grammar? (Please tick only ONE answer.)

A. Underline/circle my errors	
B. Underline/circle my errors and provide corrections	
C. Underline/circle my errors and categorize them	
D. Underline/circle my errors, categorize them, and provide corrections for me	
E. Give me a hint about my errors	
F. Give me a hint about my errors and categorize the errors for me	
G. None of the above methods	

Part B

1. How do you perceive the role of your teacher in reading your writing?

Teacher's role	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost never
Judge				
Interested reader				

2. How much of your teacher's feedback on your essay is about:

1st draft

	A lot	Some	Few	None
Organization				
Content/Ideas				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Mechanics (punctuation and spelling)				

Final draft

	A lot	Some	Few	None
Organization				
Content/Ideas				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Mechanics				

(punctuation and spelling)				

*This copy of the survey includes only those parts of the survey analyzed in this study.

Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Levels: College

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