TO MY BELOVED HUSBAND,

ÖZGE ÇAĞLAR

EFL STUDENTS' COGNITIVE JOURNEY

THROUGH

THE TEACHER'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Graduate School of Education
of
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
BILKENT UNIVERSITY
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July 2006

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

_____
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Charlotte S. Basham)
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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ABSTRACT

EFL STUDENTS' COGNITIVE JOURNEY
THROUGH
THE TEACHER'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK

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This study was designed to investigate how much students understand and utilize the teacher's written sentence, content, and discourse-level feedback, what strategies they employ in processing it, and how effectively students can relate the teacher's responses to their texts.

The study was conducted with 6 upper-intermediate level students and their writing teacher at Istanbul Technical University School of Foreign Languages. The data were collected through the students' first and revised drafts, students' and the teacher's think-aloud protocols (TAPs), and interviews with the students.

The results indicated that the students had problems understanding and interpreting the written teacher commentary when the teacher commented on all aspects of a composition in one draft such as sentence, content, and discourse, when the teacher used various ways to present her comments such as marginal, in-text, and final notes, when the teacher commented on each sentence-level error rather than to mark them selectively, and when the teacher was not clear and simple enough for students in the final notes.

This study suggests implementing a multi-draft setting, in which there is more than one writing-getting feedback-revising cycle, and selective marking as a way to improve students' writing abilities and their idea of academic writing. It also suggests that students be trained more on how to utilize the teacher's written commentary.

Key Words: Written teacher feedback/commentary/response, sentence-level commentary, content-level commentary, discourse-level commentary, think-aloud protocol (TAP) procedure.

ÖZET

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN
ÖĞRETMENİN YAZILI GERİBİLDİRİMİ İÇİNDE YAPTIĞI
BİLİŞSEL YOLCULUK

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Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin öğretmenin cümle, içerik ve söylem üzerine verdiği yazılı geribildirimi ne kadar anladıklarını ve kullandıklarını, bunları kullanırken hangi stratejilerden yararlandıklarını ve öğretmenin verdiği geribildirimi kendi metinleriyle ne derece ilişkilendirdiklerini incelemek amacıyla tasarlanmıştır.

Bu çalışma İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi'ndeki 6 üst-orta düzey öğrenci ve onların yazma dersi öğretmeniyle yürütülmüştür. Çalışma için gerekli olan bilgi öğrencilerin ilk ve düzeltilmiş metinleri, öğrencilerin ve öğretmenin sesli düşünme protokolleri ve öğrencilerle yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır.

Çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlar göstermiştir ki öğretmen belli bir metni cümle, içerik ve söylem olmak üzere her açıdan değerlendirdiğinde, yorumlarını metnin içine, sonuna ve de yanlarına yazdığında, cümle bazındaki hataların hepsine geribildirimde bulunup seçici işaretlemelerden kaçındığında ve metin sonu yorumlarında yeterince açık ve basit olmadığında öğrenciler, öğretmenin yazılı geribildirimini anlamakta ve yorumlamakta sorun yaşamaktadırlar.

Çalışma, birden fazla yazma-geribildirim alma-tekrar gözden geçirip düzeltme aşamalarının olduğu çoklu yazma ortamının hayata geçirilmesini ve seçici geribildirim vermeyi, öğrencilerin yazma becerilerini ve akademik yazma hakkındaki düşüncelerini geliştirecek bir yol olarak önermektedir. Bir diğer öneri de öğrencilerin öğretmenin yazılı yorumlarını nasıl kullanacağı üzerine eğitilmesidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yazılı öğretmen geribildirimi, cümle bazında geribildirim, içerik bazında geribildirim, söylem bazında geribildirim, sesli düşünme protokolü prosedürü.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Writing teachers are sometimes like warriors in a battle struggling against the enemies with their swords. Their red ink is their weapon and errors are enemies to kill. What they leave behind are usually frustrated and hopeless students declaring their loss of the battle. This picture illustrates the end of teachers' invasion of students' territories. Teachers may think that it is their responsibility to correct each and every error on students' papers, but is this what students expect from their teachers? Do teachers actually support or put an end to students' improvement in writing by responding to their texts in this way?

There are many studies that can be found in the literature about the feedback issue. They sometimes contradict each other, but they are all concerned with finding the best and most helpful way to give feedback for the sake of students becoming good writers. For this purpose, some studies have focused on peer-feedback, and some on teacher-student conferencing or the teacher's written response. They have all aimed at finding answers to the questions: to what extent do these types of feedback have a positive impact on students' improvement and what are students' attitudes toward them?

The studies specifically conducted on teachers' written responses have raised some different sorts of questions apart from the ones mentioned above. Some of them focus on the forms of teachers' written feedback, others deal with what to respond to

and what not to respond to, and some are concerned with students' reactions to written teacher commentary. The literature provides a variety of studies on these issues. However, I have not been able to find much detailed research which takes these issues into account from multiple perspectives of students and teachers in respect to the analysis of early and later drafts.

What I really want to learn as a foreign language teacher is what responses students make while revising their drafts after being provided with the teacher's written commentary. There are some problems with student use of my written feedback because as a teacher I am not content with revised drafts much of the time, and the students have not been sure how to best use my comments. I do not believe that a puzzle can be solved without all the basic parts, so this study will examine not only the revised drafts but also feedback of the teacher and the students.

This study aims at shedding light on the ways in which students interpret and utilize teachers' comments by means of introspective research, and how these correlate with teachers' perceptions of the process. It may also provide some insights into the difficulties students experience and the steps they take to handle them. The variety of perspectives will help end up with more detailed findings.

Background of the Study

The place of writing in L2 instruction has been determined by the approaches to language teaching in general, L1 composition theories, and the compositional requirements changing over the time. The focus on such components of writing as the writer, the text, and the audience has shifted from one to the other as a result of these different approaches to writing. Although it took a long time for L2 writing

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instruction to gain its place in foreign language instruction, today it is considered as a major part of language learning.

Early in the history of ESL, controlled composition was proposed as an approach to L2 writing, and later in the 1960s, so as to improve the fluency in writing and to give greater control over language to the student, a new form of writing, free composition, was favored. In the 1970s, the notion of process writing was first introduced. The process approach was born as a result of the dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the alternative approaches of that time. According to this view, writing is a process of developing both form and meaning. It consists of multiple drafts and formative feedback from the teacher or peers. With this approach, the center of attention is the writer, and readers are thought to be primarily interested in content, ideas, and negotiation of meaning, and only finally in form. This view of writing is currently the most widely popular one for many EFL settings in Turkey.

These various views about writing have also brought about some changes in the nature of feedback to students' work. Especially with the rise of the process approach to writing, responding to student compositions has gained a different kind of value. There are several proposals for responding to student writing. One of them is peer response. Peers come together and comment on each other's texts. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) claim that it is beneficial for students in many ways. They summarized the claims of peer response advocates. According to them, peer feedback helps students take active roles in their own learning, they can get feedback from authentic readers, and it creates a less risky but more relaxed atmosphere for students. Yet, concerns have been raised by some researchers and teachers. Carson and Nelson (1996), for example, argue that students cannot understand the purpose of peer

feedback and so cannot make use of it. It is also said that students' limited L2 language levels and their own limited performance in writing do not let the peer feedback achieve its aims (Connor & Asenavage, 1994).When students' reactions to peer feedback are considered, research shows that students do not feel themselves efficient enough, and they prefer written teacher response if they are asked (Leki, 1990; Berger, 1990; Zhang, 1995 as cited in Ferris, 2003).

Another alternative for responding to students' writing is teacher-student conferencing. There is almost no research on teacher-student conferencing with L2 writers. One of the studies conducted with ESL students revealed that both low- and high-achieving students improved their essays after the conferences (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997 as cited in Ferris, 2003). Besides peer feedback and teacher-student conferencing, there are some innovative types such as taping commentaries and computer-based response. The students, on the other hand, state that they value written teacher commentary even though they appreciate the other forms as well.

In accordance with students' preferences for written teacher commentary, many teachers also prefer giving written response to students' writing in spite of evidence of the usefulness of these various other feedback types. Considering teachers' short amount of time for responding to a text and students' negative reactions against face-to-face conversations with teachers, Ferris argues that written teacher feedback should not be replaced by other alternatives (Ferris, 2003). The studies on teacher's written response focus either on some various models teachers use while commenting on students' papers or on students' reactions to and preferences for these forms of written feedback.

One of the studies on teacher written feedback styles was done by Zamel (1985). The teachers' comments and reactions to students' compositions were examined. The study revealed that teachers generally use the same types of comments, and they are mostly concerned with linguistic errors. Additionally, it was mentioned that students do not understand some markings. As a result, the way teachers give feedback makes students consider their writing has been responded to not as a process but as a product. Zamel (1985) also points out that teachers miss some important writing features while trying to deal with all the problems in students' texts at the same time.

There is some other research on what teachers focus on while responding to students' writing. One of the studies was conducted by Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) and another by Fathman and Whalley (1990). In Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study, it is noted that teachers usually comment more on surface level structures in writing rather than on meaning and content. However, students' writing improves when they receive comments on both form and content of their essays (Fathman &Whalley, 1990).The common point these studies share is that teachers' feedback has a measurable effect on students' writing and revision processes.

Research on process approaches to writing has some implications for written feedback, too. It has revealed that positive responses to student compositions are necessary in improving students' writing skills (Cardelle & Corno, 1981). Still, the study conducted by Hyland and Hyland (2001) showed that students also demand corrective suggestions for their papers, and they do not find it useful to get too much praise but no criticism and suggestion at all.

Students' processing of teacher responses is another topic of discussion in the literature. A research study by Cohen (1987) concerns what particular writing issues teachers deal with and in what kinds of forms they present their feedback, to what extent students utilize the comments, and what forms of written teacher commentary students have problems interpreting. The study revealed that students cannot come up with effective strategies when dealing with teacher's written comments, and the real impact of written teacher feedback on students' improvement in writing is very limited. From my own experience, I should also admit that I have not been able to observe as much improvement in my students' drafts as I have expected.

Statement of the Problem

The recent trend in writing, the process approach, requires more effort from teachers and learners since it has turned the writing activity into a cycle of drafting, getting feedback, and revising. In this approach, students' repeated revisions have great importance. This revising process is supported by feedback from various sources such as peers, but mostly by the teacher's written response to students' papers.

If we consider that the goal of the process approach is to improve students' writing skills, we assume that teacher's feedback should support this process. This is what we really aim at as foreign language teachers at my home institution, Istanbul Technical University (ITU) School of Foreign Languages. However, in our regular meetings the teachers report that they have many concerns about whether they are giving feedback to students on their papers in the right form and amount, because they do not observe much improvement in students' compositions after the revising processes. This is a problem that must be solved since written feedback is used most of the time because the teacher usually does not have time to implement other forms

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of feedback such as teacher-student conferencing. Although research shows that students value teacher's written commentary more than the feedback they receive from other sources, it is clear from their response to the teacher's written comments that they experience some problems with using written teacher feedback. When asked, students may not be able to identify what causes these problems, but observing them during the revising process with the teacher's response to the compositions will most probably help researchers reach some conclusions.

Purpose of the Study

The literature on teacher's written feedback provides research on the types of written feedback teachers tend to use and students' reactions to these. On the other hand, my purpose in this study is to find how students use written teacher commentary in revision after being given written response from the teacher. In this way, it will be possible to find out where students have problems understanding, interpreting, and utilizing the teacher's comments. Additionally, while interviews will inform us about the students' strategies in handling the written teacher comments, an analysis of the teacher's verbal reports, in which she compares the first and the revised drafts will show what students appear to understand from feedback comments and how the teacher contributes to their views on revising.

Significance of the Study

The study will provide some invaluable information for language teachers, in that it will give teachers an opportunity to observe how their comments are interpreted and utilized by students. This study will also identify the strategies students employ when they do not understand or cannot interpret the teacher's comments. Finally, by defining the correlation between the students' revisions and the teacher's actual

purpose in each comment, teachers may be informed about where and why some writing problems arise. In short, the results are supposed to inform teachers about the pro's and con's of various forms of written teacher commentary.

The results will also be useful at the institutional level. In my home institution, ITU School of Foreign Languages, the teachers are supposed to give importance to the process of writing rather than the product, but the theory does not go hand in hand with practice. Although they try to comment not only on grammar and vocabulary but also on content and organization, sentence-level errors are still corrected or pointed out much more than the others. We will be able to discuss the concerns raised in our regular meetings from another perspective as a result of the research findings. These findings may help us answer many questions in our minds about how to respond to students' texts and improve our notions about useful feedback.

Research Questions

1) To what extent do students understand and utilize the teacher's written response to
    a. sentence-level errors,
    b. content, and
    c. discourse?
2) What do students do when they cannot understand or interpret the teacher's comments?
3) To what extent do the students' revised drafts correlate with what the teacher has actually pointed out in the comments?

Conclusion

In this chapter a brief summary of the discussions related to the process approach to writing and the place of feedback in writing, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the research questions were covered. In the second chapter, a detailed review of the related literature will be presented. The third chapter will give information about the methodological issues, that is the participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. In the fourth chapter, the data analysis and the findings will be discussed. In the last chapter, an overview of the study, the discussion of the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research will be presented.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

"Portrait of the English Teacher as a Tired Dog"

It is a November midnight, Johnny Carson has just ended, and throughout the

block the last lights flick off—all but one that is. A single orange light blooms

in the darkness. It is the English teacher, weary eyed, cramped of leg, hand,

and brain, sifting listlessly, but doggedly through piles of themes, circling,

marking, grading, commenting, guilt-ridden because the students were

promised that the papers would be returned last week. The fifth cup of coffee

grows cold and bitter. Just one more paper. And then one more, and then …

(Judy 1981 as quoted in Mahili, 1994, p. 24).

Writing teachers spend a great deal of their time reading and responding to

students' drafts. According to one estimate, it takes teachers at least 20 to 40 minutes

to comment on an individual paper, and when we consider the number of students in a

class and the number of assignments they submit in a semester, this represents an

enormous amount of time (Sommers, 1982).

The questions to ask here are what this practice aims at and how far this

investment in time and energy can go in achieving instructional goals. To answer

these questions, we should first understand the rationale behind responding to

students' writing and then analyze teachers' actual ways of commenting on a text, and

students' reactions to and preferences for written feedback.

In this study, I will try to discover how much students understand and utilize the teacher's written feedback, their strategies in processing it, and how effectively students can relate the teacher's response to their texts.

The literature presents us with various studies on these issues, but mostly in L1 or ESL settings and from only one or two perspectives. I expect to contribute to the literature with my study including various perspectives from teachers and students in an EFL setting. In the first section, I will give a brief explanation of why focus on feedback to writing has gained importance and describe the types of feedback proposed. I will also present an overview of studies, some of which are on the nature of written teacher commentary and on the students' reactions against and preferences for written teacher response. The last section will be on the methods used to identify the cognitive processes.

The Process Approach to Writing

How the skill of writing is considered has led to the changing approaches to the teaching of writing. For example, when the focus is only on students' finished products, the instruction tends to focus on error correction, and this is the basic principle of the product approach, which was dominant up until the 1970s. According to Williams (1989), the product model is considered to be a teacher-centered pedagogy. In a typical product-oriented writing class, the teacher informs students about how to write an essay in general terms and then assigns students a writing topic. After the students write their papers outside the class, the teacher collects the papers, reads them, and notes primarily the errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The teacher does not always write a final comment, and if s/he does, that is the only feedback the students get from their teacher.

In 1976 Zamel was one of the first to introduce the notion of writing as a process, and since then the process approach to writing has become increasingly popular both for L1 and ESL/EFL instruction. The process approach to writing is totally different from the product approach to writing, in that it accepts writing as a process, and it puts emphasis on the relationship between audience, writer, and the text itself.

In the process approach writing is seen as involving several steps: the first one is generating ideas. Then, comes writing, revising, getting feedback, and writing again (Keh, 1990a). As Leki (1991) mentions, the emphasis is not on the product but on the path students follow during the composing process. The stages in the composing process and their advantages have been discussed by various scholars. For example, Lannon (1995), who proposes a three-cycle writing process model- rehearsing, drafting, and revising- asserts that as these cycles are recursive, students can go back and forth to make revisions or changes, so they can improve their writing by practicing through these stages. Zamel (1982) also argues that when students are involved in this process, they learn to explore their thoughts and ideas, and as a result their products also improve. Similarly, Dyer (1996) asserts that students become better writers by learning to write through writing by the help of these stages.

White and Arndt (1991) and Williams (1989) emphasize the points to focus on at each stage. They say that while writing their first drafts, students are supposed to focus on conveying the meaning to the audience, but not to spend much time correcting grammatical errors. They generate their own ideas by means of brainstorming, discussions, free writing, and outlining as the first step. According to these authors, what students have to do after getting a response to their texts from the

teacher or peers is to revise and edit their papers. The important thing White and Arndt (1991) and Williams (1989) point out here is that students can revise their texts at every stage, but correcting the text grammatically ("editing") should often be postponed until the end of the process. Editing refers to correcting the surface-level errors with the help of feedback. The last thing these scholars emphasize is the evaluation stage, at which point the aim is to improve writing, but not to grade the paper. Again it is clear that getting feedback from others is critical for student writers.

One feature of the process approach to writing is making students more aware of the audience they write for. Sommers (1982) explains the reason why it is necessary to create a sense of audience for students. She asserts that it is difficult for students to anticipate a reader's reaction and so to write accordingly. Therefore, when teachers comment on students' papers as readers, students can question their own writing themselves, and so later on they take the control of their own texts.

Another advantage of encouraging students to realize the existence of the audience is proposed by Singh and Sarker (1993). They allege that as students anticipate the audience, they learn the importance of the content in addition to the form. According to Lannon (1995), "they need to decide who their audience is and how to connect with it. They need to decide what goal they want their writing to achieve and how to make sure the writing achieves that goal. They need to decide what to say and how to say it" (p.4). Likewise, Raimes (1991) states that when ideas and organization take priority, linguistic accuracy becomes an issue of secondary importance. When the basic principles of the process approach to writing are considered, what these researchers propose make sense since they all point out that linguistic accuracy is not the most important thing in students' texts, and they draw

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the attention to organization and content. The role of feedback on writing is also emphasized by each of them.

The changed roles of the teacher and students are critical in the process approach to writing. In this approach, unlike the product approach, the teacher is the facilitator, and it is not her concern to monitor grammatical exercises, assign specific topics, give evaluative criteria to judge writing, or demonstrate "good writing" with models (Zamel, 1976). However, the teacher's role cannot be underestimated because "during the composing process, the teacher's role may be as important as the students'. It is from the teacher that the very first step of the composing process starts" (Gumus, 2002, p.9). In other words, even though students have more responsibility, the teacher's role is still important.

Students have some roles within the process approach to writing, too. They collaborate with each other in small groups, and the teacher tries to guide them by giving advice and suggestions. They have more responsibility on their shoulders since the teacher gives them more time and opportunity to select topics, brainstorm, write drafts, revise, and give feedback to each other (Raimes, 1991; Myers, 1997).

In short, the process approach to writing is "a multiple draft process which consists of: generating ideas (pre-writing); writing a first draft with an emphasis on content (to 'discover' meaning/author's ideas); writing second and third (and possibly more) drafts to revise ideas and the communication of those ideas" (Keh, 1990b, p.294). Throughout these stages students need feedback from various sources in order for them to have a sense of audience they communicate their ideas to and so as to involve writers in the revising process.

The Types of Feedback from Different Sources

The fundamental element of the process approach to writing is feedback. "It can be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. In other words, it is the comments, questions, and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce 'reader-based prose' as opposed to writer-based prose" (Keh, 1990b, p.294). The response students receive can be divided into two groups according to the sources which provide feedback on their writing. This can be their peers and/or their teacher. Each type of response has its advantages and disadvantages for students and teachers.

Peer Feedback

Peer feedback is the response students give to each other's papers. They may do this in class or out of the class, in groups or in pairs. Connor and Asenavage (1994) acknowledge that since students can respond to each other's texts at such various stages of writing as planning, drafting, and editing, it illustrates the main principle behind the process approach. Some pros and cons of peer feedback have been stated by some researchers.

According to Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), it is advantageous for students because it provides a less risky but more relaxed atmosphere for them, and so they become active in their own learning. Moreover, peer feedback not only helps students develop a genuine sense of audience in the writing classroom (Keh, 1990b; Mittan, 1989), it also provides students with the opportunities to develop their critical reading and analysis skills (Keh, 1990b; Chaudron, 1984 as cited in Paulus, 1999). Likewise, Mittan (1989) argues that "by responding critically to their colleagues' writing, students exercise the critical thinking they must apply to their own work" (p.211).

Furthermore, with the help of peer feedback students can focus on their intended meaning and improve their ideas as they discuss alternative viewpoints (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994).

Even though peer feedback is one of the basic components in process writing, sometimes it can be disastrous regarding students' giving and getting feedback. If students do not cooperate with and trust each other, the aim of peer feedback cannot be achieved (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Murphy, 1993). Carson and Nelson (1998) claim that some students cannot understand the purpose of peer feedback and so cannot make use of it. When it comes to giving feedback to a peer, it is acknowledged by Connor and Asenavage (1994) in their study that students' L2 level and their performance in writing do not let the peer feedback process achieve its aim. What about the students' preferences for peer feedback?

When students' reactions to peer feedback are considered, research shows some contradictory results, in that students are not as negative as the researchers mentioned above. In a study of students' attitudes toward peer feedback, Mangelsdorf (1992) demonstrated that most of the students had positive thoughts about it. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) discovered that all the students in their study agreed that peer review helped them create an audience perspective and develop their ideas.

On the other hand, the research has also revealed that students do not feel confident about peer feedback, and they prefer written teacher response (Leki, 1990; Berger, 1990; Zhang, 1995 as cited in Ferris, 2003).

In short, peer feedback is thought to be helpful in the revising process as long as students are confident and skilled enough to respond to each other's texts and as long as they are ready to collaborate with each other. Students should be aware of the

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purpose of peer feedback. While the importance of peer feedback cannot be denied, it is clear that there must be other types of response to students' texts supporting the writing-revising process because of some disadvantages of peer feedback.

<p style="text-align:center">Teacher-Student Conferencing</p>

Teacher-student conferencing presents another alternative for getting and giving feedback. Hafez (1994) illustrates this alternative as the teacher's and individual or group of students' meeting out of the class by appointment. The literature does not provide much research on teacher-student conferencing either in ESL or in EFL settings.

One of the studies on teacher-student conferences, which was conducted with ESL students, showed that the conferences enabled both low- and high-achieving students to improve their writing skills (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997 as cited in Ferris, 2003). Similarly, what Keh (1990b) derived from her research is that teacher-student conferencing is beneficial for students, in that students develop a sense of 'live' audience because there is an interaction between students and the teacher, so the teacher can ask students some questions about unclear parts in the text, help them cope with the difficulties they have encountered while writing, and support them during the decision-making process.

Murray (1982) demonstrates the teacher's role in these conferences as a guide helping students see their strengths and weaknesses: "All the texts can be improved, and they can discuss what is working and can be made to work better, and what is not working, and how it might be made to work" (Murray, 1982, p.145). It is clear that the teacher does not act like an authority desiring to grade the paper, but rather a

participant in the writing process. The importance of the writers' contribution cannot be denied, of course.

According to Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), in order for the teacher-student conferencing to achieve its aim, the writers' contribution is a prerequisite. In other words, students should be active while the teacher is commenting on the text. Keh (1990b) also states that if the teacher acts like the authority leading the conversation and ignoring any other questions that do not fit into his/her plan, conferences will fail. Murray (1985) is in favor of students' complete guidance of the conferences by responding to their own texts before getting feedback from the teacher, which is an 'indirect' procedure. On the other hand, such composition theorists as Silva (1997), and Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986 as cited in Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998) have raised their concerns about this approach, stating that students are not prepared to take the whole ownership of their own writing. Zamel (1985) summarizes the importance of both the teacher and the student in the conferences:

> This dynamic interchange and negotiation is most likely to take place when writers and readers work together face-to-face. Instead of limiting our responses to written comments and reactions, which by their very nature are 'disembodied remarks' (Sommers 1982:155) that proceed in only one direction, we should set up collaborative sessions and conferences during which important discoveries can be made by both reader and writer (p.97).

Ferris & Hedgcock (1998) explain why teacher-student conferences have become popular: first, such conferences save time and energy when compared to marking the papers; second, it provides the ability to interact and negotiate

immediately; and finally, it is effective for auditory rather than visual students when various learning styles are considered.

The students' preference for teacher-student conferences is another topic of discussion. Whereas some students find these student-teacher conferences useful, others might prefer written feedback and avoid the conferences. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) list the reasons why students avoid conferences as follows: students prefer written feedback, they may not remember the things they have discussed during the conference, and some do not feel comfortable while talking to the teacher face-to-face. According to these researchers, it may be good to recommend that students use a tape recorder so as not to forget; teachers may ask students' preferences for written or oral feedback; group conferences can be a solution for those who feel uncomfortable in one to one student-teacher exchanges.

In Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) study, most of the students in both ESL and EFL groups in their study reported that written feedback should be given with writing conferences. When the EFL group is considered separately, it is natural that EFL learners are more in favor of written feedback, perhaps because they think it is the best way to see and correct errors (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

To sum up, teacher-student conferences provide an opportunity for writers and readers to work collaboratively and discuss the text in detail to improve it. Yet, it is more advantageous to arrange conferences subsequent to the written teacher commentary because in this way both the teacher and the student would know what to talk about. It is not possible for teachers like those in university EFL settings to spend too much time on each student's text.

<center>Written Teacher Commentary</center>

Despite the growing interest in peer-response and teacher-student conferencing, written teacher commentary is still the most popular type of feedback in L2 writing. Handwritten commentary is the primary method used by most of the teachers (Ferris et al., 1997). Leki's (1991) and Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's studies (1994) indicate the students' preferences for written teacher response, too.

<center>The Other Types of Feedback</center>

The other ways of the teacher's response to drafts are taped commentary and electronic feedback. Teachers can record their remarks on a tape recorder and just put tape references on the paper. It is advantageous not only for teachers as it saves time but also for student as they can observe how the responding process goes on. Teachers can also provide feedback via e-mails or using the comment functions on their computers. As Hyland (2003) suggests students can access some online sources such as dictionaries and grammar sites when they receive the teacher's comments electronically.

<center>5 Ws and 1 H of Written Teacher Feedback:</center>

<center>Who, what, how, where, when, why?</center>

The literature presents us with various studies on written teacher feedback. These studies investigate how teachers respond to students' texts, and in doing so, how they focus on some dichotomies such as responding to content or form, to early or later drafts, in end comments or side comments, with praise or criticism, and with direct or indirect corrections. The impact of written teacher commentary on students' improvement in fluency and accuracy is another ongoing debate among the researchers.

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<u>The Teacher's Personal Impact on Feedback</u>

How the teacher approaches the writing itself is one of the main factors affecting his/her way of responding to students' texts. Beach and Bridwell (1984) discuss this issue as follows:

> The attitudes that teachers have toward writing strongly influence their own teaching practices, particularly their evaluation of student writing. Their beliefs . . . serve as filters that train their attention to qualities (or lack thereof) in student writing (as quoted in Zamel, 1985, p.80).

Murray (1984) also states "We want our students to perform to the standards of other students, to study what we plan for them to study and to learn from it what we or our teachers learned" (p.7).

It is common that the teacher suggests some changes in the text and students revise accordingly. The same text read by different readers may create different feelings for each reader. The reason for this may be that each person has different expectations and assumptions about the text, and that is the same for teachers. Therefore, their feedback is affected by these assumptions and feelings and even by their anxiety about their own writing ability. This is what some researchers concluded from their research (Schwartz, 1984; Freedman 1984; Gere, Schuessler & Abbott, 1984 as cited in Zamel, 1985).

<u>The Teacher's Multiple Roles</u>

In accordance with the teacher's own assumptions and feelings toward writing, the roles s/he takes also change. Purves (1984) describes four roles: a common reader who reads for pleasure, a reader who reads and judges the text to improve it, a literary critic who analyzes and interprets the text, and finally a reader whose purpose is to

improve the writer, not the text, like a diagnostician-therapist who can understand a person's illnesses from their texts. Purves (1984) suggests that a teacher adopt all these roles while responding to students' drafts because

> the student as a writer must learn to deal with all these kinds of readers, know
> that writing is not simply to or for an audience, but that the text is read
> variously not only by different people for different purposes but also variously
> by the same reader (p.265).

Which roles the teacher takes can lead to success in writing? Muncie (2000) says while making his/her comments on students' drafts, the teacher occupies different roles "such as 'audience', 'assistant' (Tribble 1996, p.119) 'consultant' (Dheram 1995: 160), or 'reader' (Keh 1990: 301). These are in addition to the more traditional teacher role of an evaluator of learners' work" (Muncie, 2000, p.48). However, according to him, such roles the teacher assumes as expert and evaluator do not give students the choice of not using the teacher's written comments, and this brings about some undesirable outcomes:

> This lack of choice means that in producing the revised draft, the learner does
> not have to decide what to do, only (at best) how to do it. This implies a lack
> of critical processing and evaluation of the feedback. The result of not having
> to deal with the feedback at this extra, evaluatory and decision-making level
> of reasoning can be argued to reduce, in turn, the impact of the feedback and
> revision process on the long-term improvement in writing ability (p.49).

Muncie (2000) points out that apart from the teacher's personal beliefs, as mentioned before, there are some other factors determining the teacher's roles such as

institutional requirements. Most of the time teachers find themselves playing the role of an expert and authority.

In short, the roles teachers assume for themselves affect their comments on students' papers and in consequence the writing process and students' success as writers.

How are these roles realized by students? Why do most students see their teachers, as Leki (1991) states, as the best source of information? While the roles the teacher takes determine the way s/he responds to the text, it is inevitable that the way the teacher responds to the text shapes his/her own role, too.

<u>Teachers' Ways of Responding to Student Writing</u>

Hyland (2003) argues that a teacher should give feedback on all aspects of students' writing: "structure, organization, style, content, and presentation" (p.185), but they do not have to respond to all these aspects in each draft. Ferris (2002) suggests that the teacher be aware of the students' individual needs and preferences so that s/he can decide which problems should be prioritized (as cited in Hyland, 2003). Ferris (2002) gives the following list of errors which may help teachers while deciding on what to respond to:

- Genre-specific errors- those particular to the current text-type

- Stigmatizing errors- those that most disturb the particular target community of writers

- Comprehensibility errors- those that most interfere with the clarity of the writing

- Frequent errors- those consistently made by the individual student across his or her writing

- Student-identified errors- those the student would like the teacher to focus on (as quoted in Hyland, 2003, p.186).

Another type of distinction teachers may consider while commenting on sentence-level issues is the global and local error distinction as suggested by Bates et al. (1993). Although these terms were used as linguistic terms before, Bates et al. (1993) have used them for ESL sentence-level errors. According to them, the errors which impede understanding (such as verb tense errors) are called "global errors", and the errors which do not affect the comprehensibility (such as incorrect or missing article) are called "local errors". They suggest that this distinction help teachers be aware of the serious and less serious errors (Bates et al., 1993).

Zamel (1985) attempted to analyze the actual teacher response to student writing. She analyzed 15 teachers' comments, reactions, and markings on university level ESL students' compositions. What distinguishes this study from many others in the literature is that these compositions were not collected for research but in the actual course of the lessons. The results revealed that the teachers' responses were similar to each other and that they mostly focused on surface-level errors while ignoring a more serious problem with the meaning. The researcher infers that the teachers require the students to revise their texts just on the surface level, and the students do not accept writing as an ongoing process because the teachers create an atmosphere where being a good writer means a mastery of linguistic knowledge. The findings of her study revealed another problem with the written teacher feedback:

ESL writing teachers misread student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed

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and final products, and rarely make content-specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text (Zamel, 1985, p.86).

What Zamel (1985) recommends on the basis of her research is that teachers help students deal with the problems with meaning in their texts and take the role of a consultant, assistant, and a facilitator instead of the authority. In addition, Zamel (1985) tells teachers that they should not mix content-related comments with grammatical corrections in the same draft. Moreover, she tells teachers to "replace vague commentary and references to abstract rules and principles with text-specific strategies" (p.95).

Sommers (1982) has previously pointed out some similar results to those in Zamel's (1985) study, in that teachers tend to comment on form rather than content, and their comments are too directive. Such comments "encourage the students to believe that their first drafts are finished drafts, not intervention drafts, and that all they need to do is patch and polish their writing" (Sommers, 1982, p.151). Sommers (1982) also emphasizes the fact that the teacher's handwritten commentary is "arbitrary and idiosyncratic" (p.149) and too general; and therefore, comments are confusing and ineffective. Furthermore, "most teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped from text to text" (Sommers, 1982, p.152).

On the other hand, some research in the following years has indicated just the opposite. In Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study both the teachers and the students reported valuable information about written teacher comments. This study was conducted in two different contexts, an EFL Institute and an EFL University. The teacher in the university EFL study claimed that she focused on grammar, mechanics,

vocabulary, organization, and content, but content had the priority. Her students also reported that they received more comments on content though the other types of errors were also marked by the teacher.

What to focus on in students' texts, content or form, has been a topic of discussion in the literature. Fathman and Whalley (1990) investigated which area of focus is more effective. The results indicate that whether given together or separately, content and form-focused feedback affects the students' revisions positively. However, their study noted that rewriting itself serves the same goal. Furthermore, it is reported that content and grammar feedback can be given at the same time but only if the comments on content are general and the comments on grammar show the exact location of an error.

What is common in these three studies is that the authors are all in favor of text-specific comments.

Ferris et al. (1997) have drawn the attention away from the content or form debate to some other issues that should be considered as the nature of written teacher commentary. They analyzed 111 papers written by 47 ESL students and categorized both end and side comments one teacher used. They reported that the teacher met many requirements of what is considered effective feedback. Her comments served various objectives (asking for clarification, giving feedback on grammar etc.); she used a variety of syntactic forms (imperatives, questions etc.); she preferred text-specific comments. Additionally, the authors realized that she had adjusted her response to the students' writing according to the type of the assignments, the time in the semester, and students' proficiency levels. They concluded that:

Description of teacher response to student writing must go well beyond simple

discussions of whether a teacher should respond to 'content' or 'form'

(p.175)...the substance and form of teacher commentary can vary significantly

depending upon the genre of writing being considered, the point in the term at

which the feedback is given, and the abilities and personalities of individual

students (pp.175-176).

Ferris et al. (1997) concluded that "there is no "one-size-fits-all" form of teacher

commentary!" (p.178). This is valid in EFL settings since language learning process is

different for each individual, and it requires the use various techniques to improve the

language proficiency of each learner.

Another issue in written teacher feedback is whether direct correction or

indirect correction is more effective in students' improvement in writing while

responding to text-specific form-based problems. Bates et al. (1993) and Ferris et al.

(1997) declared that in order to stimulate a student response, it is better to indicate the

location and perhaps the type of error instead of directly correcting it. Truscott (1999)

states that direct error correction does not improve student writing. A simple set of

correction codes like the ones suggested by Byrne (1998) can be used; for example,

'S' is used to refer to a spelling mistake (as cited in Hyland, 2003). Using these

symbols reduces the number of written words and red ink the teacher uses in a

student's paper; however, sometimes it is difficult to categorize an error when the

symbols are used.

Finally, although it is relatively small, there is the literature on the location of

written feedback. Connors and Lunsford (1993) say that some teachers use end

comments, some side comments, and some both. They also report that there are

teachers who give their comments at the beginning. The purposes of these comments are more important than their locations in students' papers. For example, comments are used at the beginning to inform readers about what they should focus on while reading. Ferris et al. (1997) approve of final more than the marginal commentary because final note is more comprehensive and clearer as a result of the large space in which to write. Furthermore, it allows the teacher to read the paper one more time to decide what priorities to mention in the text. The authors actually recommend a combination of margin and end comments. The importance of the marginal comments should not be ignored. As Bates et al. (1983) point out in their book, marginal comments show the exact location of the weaknesses and strengths in a text.

<div align="center">Balance between Praise-Criticism-Suggestion</div>

The use of praise, criticism, and suggestion in the teacher commentary has been another topic of discussion in the literature on the nature of written teacher feedback and its impact on students' improvement in writing.

Hyland & Hyland (2001) describe these terms as follows in their research:

We view praise as an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback. It, therefore, suggests a more intense or detailed response than simple agreement. Criticism, on the other hand, we define as ''an expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment'' on a text (Hyland, 2000a, p. 44). This definition thus emphasizes commentary which finds fault in aspects of a text, and we felt the need to distinguish this from a third category, suggestion, which we regard as coming from the more positive end of a continuum. Suggestions differ from criticisms in containing an explicit

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recommendation for remediation, a relatively clear and accomplishable action

for improvement, which is sometimes referred to as ''constructive criticism''

(p.186).

A study on what teachers use in their comments was carried out by Connors

and Lunsford (1993). They analyzed 3000 teacher-marked student essays to see what

teachers preferred to use. While 9% of the comments were essentially positive, 23%

were essentially negative. 42% of the comments began positively and then went on

negatively, and 11% just the opposite. The results revealed that the teachers did not

use only praise. Additionally, praise was always found in papers with high scores.

One of the other interesting findings is that the comments including praise were the

friendliest ones signed with the teacher's initials. This was perceived by the

researchers as indicating the teacher's hunger for well-written student essays. The

papers that received only negative comments were the ones with low scores, and all

the comments were a kind of reflection of how disappointed the teacher was with the

text. The most favorable form was to begin with praise and to go on with criticism.

The reason for this may be a current trend to find at least one good point in students'

writing according to the researchers.

Hyland & Hyland (2001) also worked on the teacher's use of praise, criticism,

and suggestion in their response to students' texts. They completed their study within

the context of a 14-week full-time English proficiency course at a university in New

Zealand. The results showed that praise was the most frequently employed function in

the feedback of the teachers, but this was often used to soften criticisms and

suggestions rather than simply to respond to good work. Many of the criticisms and

suggestions were also mitigated by the use of hedging devices, question forms, and

personal attribution. 76% of all the criticism and 64% of the suggestions were mitigated in some way. The results showed that these paired-patterns, hedges, personalization, and interrogative syntax were used by the teachers as mitigation strategies. The most common pattern in the data was the praise–criticism–suggestion triad. This strategy serves both to mitigate the potential threat of the criticism and to move the students towards improving either their current text or their writing processes more generally in the longer term. Questions were also a means of highlighting knowledge limitations and used to weaken the force of a statement by making it relative to a writer's state of knowledge.

Hyland (2003) asserts that responding to students' writing is much more than writing comments in a paper. It is actually a kind of social interaction which can affect the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the instruction. Therefore, for Hyland and Hyland (2001), teachers' use of mitigation strategies for softening the criticism is a way to protect this relationship.

On the other hand, interviews with the students revealed that they were often unable to understand the teachers' mitigated comments. In each case study, the students either misunderstood or partly understood the comments. They got confused and so either made unnecessary changes or ignored the comment (Hyland, 2003).

It is a very sensitive issue to include praise, criticism, and suggestion in written feedback because it is directly related to students' self-esteem as writers, too. Hillocks (1986) argues that writing is something personal and that too much criticism may cause students' attitudes toward writing to change while having no contribution to the improvement in the quality of students' writing.

Diederich (1974) underlined the importance of praise by saying "noticing and praising whatever a student does well improves writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly" (as quoted in Raimes, 1983, p.88). Similarly, Fathman and Whalley (1990) draw attention to the role of comments that give encouragement and suggestions because they discovered in their study that these kinds of comments brought about improvement in the content.

Since the use of praise and criticism do not give any explicit advice to students about what they should do in order to get rid of the problems in their texts, it is difficult for them to take the right steps on their own. Consequently, they ignore the comment when they do not understand the message in it. What teachers should do is to make suggestions following criticism (Hyland, 2003).

The Impact of Written Teacher Response

Ferris et al. (1997) studied the impact of written teacher response on students' improvement in writing. Forty seven advanced university ESL students participated in the study. They first examined pragmatic goals and linguistic features of the comments, that is, the characteristics of the teachers' written commentary in 110 first drafts. Then, they examined the revised versions to see if the comments led to any changes, and if so, whether these changes could be perceived as the signs of improvement.

The results of this study revealed that the changes were made mostly in response to the marginal requests for information, requests, and summary comments about grammar. The comments providing information in question or statement forms and positive comments did not bring about any changes at all. Moreover, though the longer and text-specific comments were accompanied with changes, shorter and

general comments were not. Finally, it was discovered that the use or absence of hedges had no impact on the students' writing. In short, the study indicated that the teacher's written comments resulted in either positive changes in the text or no changes at all, which is interpreted by the authors as evidence of the existing conflict that students either pay attention to the teacher's comments and make the necessary changes or just ignore it and avoid any changes. The majority of the changes made by the students led to improvement in their writing. Fewer than 5% of the changes were considered to be negative.

The dissertation studies by Dessner (1991) and Lam (1992) also indicated that the teacher's comments, especially the ones providing suggestions, had a positive impact on the students' revisions (as cited in Ferris et al., 1997).

In contrast, Cohen (1987) stated in his study that "the activity of teacher feedback as currently constituted and realized may have more limited impact on the learners than the teachers would desire" (p. 66). The reasons for this undesirable limited impact of written teacher feedback on students' improvement are that the teachers tend to use uninformative, short comments in single words or phrases, and that the teachers do comment more on mechanics and grammar instead of vocabulary, organization, and content. At this point the author drew attention to the consistency of these results with the ones mentioned in Zamel's (1985) study, which revealed that teachers' feedback usually focuses on accuracy rather than meaning and therefore do not contribute to general improvement in student writing.

Similarly, Sommers (1982) states that written teacher feedback does not always help students improve their texts. There are even times when the feedback causes the revised texts to be worse than the previous version. She points out teachers

misdirect their students since their comments seem to be focusing on only a word or words but not the overall meaning.

> Teachers' comments do not provide their students with an inherent reason for revising the structure and meaning of their texts, since the comments suggest to students that the meaning of their texts is already there, finished, produced, and all that is necessary is better word or phrase. The processes of revising, editing, and proofreading are collapsed and reduced to a single trivial activity, and the students' misunderstanding of the revision process as a rewording activity is reinforced by their teachers' comments (p.151).

What's more, according to Sommers (1982), teachers sometimes misread the texts and give wrong comments. As a result, feedback not only fails to improve the text quality but also causes the revised text to be worse than the previous one.

Semke (1984) investigated how effective the teacher's written comments were, and in order to find out the answer, she separated 141 first-year university students into four groups, in which they would receive different forms of feedback from the teacher. In the first group the teacher did not correct the mistakes but wrote comments and questions. In the second group the teacher marked all the errors and supplied the correct forms. The students in the third group were provided with positive comments and corrections. In the last group the teacher located the errors by codes, asked the students to find the correct form and write the essay again. According to the research results, what improves students' writing skills is not the feedback they receive but the writing practice itself. It is concluded that the teacher's response is not responsible for accuracy and fluency in writing. On the other hand, although written teacher feedback cannot lead to success in writing, the teacher

feedback may affect students' attitudes toward writing negatively, especially when they are asked to find the correct forms themselves.

Like Semke (1984), Robb et al. (1986) attempted to find out the effects of four different forms of teacher response on students' improvement in writing. They found that students' improvement in accuracy did not have any relation to the type of feedback they received. The researchers emphasize that teachers should not expect their students to improve their composing abilities as long as they go on giving corrective feedback on surface-level errors.

Fathman and Whalley (1990) investigated the effectiveness of form-focused (grammar) and content-focused teacher feedback. They divided 72 ESL students into four groups, and each group received a different type of feedback from the teacher. While the first group received no feedback, the second one received only content-focused feedback, and the third group got only form-focused feedback. The students in the last group were supplied with the teacher's response both on grammar and content. The study suggests that feedback on grammar and content, whether given together or separately, affects the revising process positively. When the revisions of the form-focused and content-focused feedback groups made are considered, it was obvious that all the students in the form-focused feedback group improved their accuracy in revisions, but the students in the content-focused feedback group could not improve the content of their writing as successfully as the other group although they could improve their content to some extent. The fact that the comments on content are more general but not text-specific can be accepted as the reasons for this result according to the researchers. All groups, regardless of the feedback type they received, were somewhat successful in improving the content.

Another important conclusion of this research is that there is no need for the teacher to always intervene in the writing process because it was observed that the students in the no-feedback group managed to make the necessary revisions. The authors refer to Graham (1983) who said "frequency of teacher feedback does not ensure better student writing" (as quoted in Fathman & Whalley, 1990).

When to respond to the students' texts is another factor determining the students' improvement in writing abilities. Ferris et al. (1997) found that students care more about the preliminary drafts than about the final drafts. Moreover, it is also mentioned that students try harder to respond to the teacher's comments on first drafts. Feedback on early drafts is used more by the students, and they improve their writing in this way (Hyland, 1998). Some other researchers have noted that response on the intermediate drafts brings about changes in the subsequent drafts and so leads to improvement as well (Freedman, 1987; Hillocks, 1986; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Krashen, 1984 as cited in Ferris et al., 1997).

Cohen (1990) lists some conditions which enable students to utilize feedback effectively:

1. When you are knowledgeable enough about the comments/corrections,

2. When the feedback is in an area which you deem important for your immediate or long-term needs,

3. When the feedback is clear,

4. When you have strategies for dealing with the feedback (p.111).

In this section I tired to summarize the literature on written teacher feedback in terms of why, where, when, and how written teacher commentary is given and its

effect on students' improvement in writing. In the following section, the studies on the written teacher response will be presented, but from students' perspective.

Written Teacher Response from the Students' Point Of View

While some studies focus on the fundamental issues in giving written teacher feedback, there are also some studies investigating students' reactions to and preferences for written teacher response. Since learners are the actual users of teachers' written commentary, their reactions and preferences have great value in understanding the use of feedback.

Ferris (1995) reviews the literature on students' response to teachers' written comments under two headings. The first group of studies that were carried out by Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994); Leki (1991); Radecki & Swales (1988 as cited in Ferris,1995) were about students' general preferences for teacher feedback, and the ones in the second group that were conducted by Cohen (1987); Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) ; McCurdy (1992 as cited in Ferris,1995) were about students' response to feedback they already received. In the first group of studies, students were asked what kinds of teacher response they would like to receive without questioning the current type they were being provided. The students in the second group were asked to focus and comment on the way their teachers' gave feedback in their papers. They were also asked to mention their subsequent strategies when they were utilizing that feedback. The next section reviews these studies.

Students' Preferences for Written Teacher Feedback

Leki (1991) revealed how important it was to ESL students in freshman composition classes to write error-free essays. As a result, they demanded that their teachers point out grammatical errors such as article use and verb tenses. According to

the majority of the students in the study, the teacher should mark all errors whether they are major or minor. As a response to another question in the study, more than half of the students reported that they wanted their teachers not only to locate the errors but also give some clues about how to correct them. Also, there were students who asked their teachers to write the correct answer instead of locating and giving clues about how to correct it. They believed that they could get rid of the errors only in this way.

Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) study focused both on ESL and FL learners' preferences for written teacher feedback. Surprisingly, they received different responses from ESL and FL subjects. While the FL writers indicated a preference for feedback more on the formal features (such as language use and mechanics than on content, style, and organization) the ESL students who participated in the study wanted to receive feedback on content, organization and grammar. They first preferred response on content and organization, then on grammar. The researchers explained this as a result of the instructors' influence on students because what the students said may have been "a direct reflection of the priorities they thought their instructors were already observing" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, p.155). According to the authors, the reason for this difference between FL and ESL students' preferences may be caused by different perceptions of writing. FL students usually accept writing as a kind of language practice, but for ESL students, writing has importance beyond the classroom, in academic contexts, for instance. The results also indicated that the students in both groups were rather unhappy with the teacher's use of red ink.

From my own experience in an EFL setting, I can say that our students are not that much different from the FL students in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) study. They also perceive writing as a grammar lesson, and they demand to be corrected grammatically.

Additionally, when the students in the same study were asked about which mode of teacher response they would like to get, most of the students across the FL and ESL groups were in favor of both written feedback and conferences. There were not many students who preferred only written feedback or only conferencing. The most interesting result is the FL students' greater preference for written feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study has totally different results. They discovered that most of the EFL university students preferred comments about vocabulary and content more than on grammar. Although the high and intermediate performers thought that the current focus of the teacher in their papers was fine, the low performers asked for more comments about content.

When the students' reactions to the teachers' use of praise, criticism, and suggestion in their comments are considered, it is clear that the students appreciate praise and criticism only if it is accompanied by suggestion (Hyland & Hyland, 2001).

Although criticism may be believed to result in failure in improving the quality of writing and students' self-esteem as writers, only praise for written texts is not something students desire to get according to the literature. Cardelle and Corno (1981) investigated students' preferences for praise and criticism in their writing. They formed three groups of students learning Spanish as L2. One group received only praise, and the other one got only criticism. The last group was provided with a

combination of praise and criticism. The students' answers in the questionnaire demonstrated that the students preferred the combined form most. When they were asked whether the comments contributed to their improvement in writing and increased their motivation, almost all the students in the third group reported they thought so. The most striking result is the students' statement that no feedback at all would help more than only praise or only criticism would.

Similar results can be observed in the results of Ferris' (1995) research. The students expressed their ideas on the teacher's use of feedback. They mentioned how valuable it was for them to receive positive feedback from their teachers, and how disappointing it was when they could not see even one positive comment in their papers. However, some students, though not many, indicated the need for criticism, so Ferris (1995) suggests that teachers should provide their students with constructive criticism as well as praise.

<u>Students' Reactions to and Processing of Written Teacher Feedback</u>

Ferris contributed to the second group of studies with her research in 1995. However, there is a significant difference between the studies mentioned in this part and Ferris' (1995) study, in that she conducted the research in multi-draft settings. She conducted her study in a university ESL setting. At the end of the study "145 (93.5%) students felt that their teachers' feedback had indeed helped them improve as writers because it helped them know what to improve or avoid in the future, find their mistakes, and clarify their ideas. Overall, the students seemed to respect their teachers' opinions and appreciate their efforts and attention" (p.46).

The students in Ferris' (1995) study ordered the comments they received from most to least useful as follows: grammar, organization, content, mechanics (spelling,

punctuation, and capitalization), and vocabulary. Additionally, they reported they paid attention to all comments in their papers.

How students perceive the teacher's role determines how much they care about the teacher's comments and what they expect from the teacher. Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study showed that the EFL students in the study accepted their teacher as a judge and also as an interested reader at the same time. Only two students questioned the role of the teacher's comments in improving their writing.

The students in Leki's (1991) study were also asked to report their subsequent reactions once they were provided with the teacher's feedback. The findings indicated that all the students checked the marks the teacher made in their papers. Even though they demanded correction of each and every error in their texts, and they gave more importance to comments on grammatical errors more than the ones on the content, the results showed that the number of students who remembered the markings on content was higher than the number of the students who remembered the comments on grammar and organization.

The studies of Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) , Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994), and McCurdy (1992, as cited in Ferris, 1995) in short, revealed that ESL students find teachers' responses valuable and important. The majority of the students read most of their papers again and agree with most of the comments the teachers have made. They take their teachers' comments quite seriously and make use of them because they think the teachers' feedback helps them improve their writing.

Hyland (2003) suggests that students tend to use most of the comments they receive. In his study, students either used a comment, which was generally on grammar, and made the necessary revisions, or avoided revision by deleting the part

commented on. The study also shows that students make the changes their teacher asks for without understanding why, which indicates that the comments bring about immediate corrections but no improvement in student writing in the long-term.

<u>Students' Problems with Written Teacher Response and</u>

<u>Students' Strategies to Sort out these Problems</u>

In this section research showing students' difficulties understanding and interpreting the teacher's comments and their strategies to solve their problems is discussed.

In Ferris' (1995) study, half of the students stated they did not have any problems understanding the teacher's comments. Some of them indicated the teacher's handwriting as a problem and other students reported that they sometimes did not understand the grammar terms and symbols the teacher used. In addition, some of the students also complained about the teacher's comments on content since they were too general or too specific.

Again in the same study, when the question comes up as to what students do in response to the feedback they receive, the answers vary regarding the preliminary and final draft revisions. While most of the students reported that they had consulted an outside source such as teachers, peers, dictionary, and grammar books on early drafts, half of the students said they made the changes by themselves or did nothing on final drafts (Ferris, 1995).

In a similar study, Altan (1998), students reported they rarely misunderstood the teacher's comments. The comments which were not understood were on content and organization. The students' difficulty in interpreting some symbols and

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understanding too general comments are among the other important points to be considered in my study. One of the students Altan (1998) interviewed with said:

When I get home and when I get this paper to improve, I see lots of arrows here and there. I try to follow them, but I can't. I try to read the things my teacher wrote on the margins but I can't. I can't follow the arrows, I can't read my teacher's handwriting. I can't understand what she means by that word. I guess my teacher should fix up the way she gives her comments and corrections before she expects me to fix up my paper. Everything on my paper looks so mixed up that after a while I get tired of figuring out what this and that means, and I just leave the paper there (Altan, 1998, p.33).

Uzel's (1995) study showed that the majority of the students could understand the teacher's comments without any difficulties. However, Uzel (1995) emphasizes that there are still some students who cannot understand what the teacher means, but the instructors are not aware of this fact.

Another research study on the problems students experience with written teacher commentary and their strategies to deal with them was conducted by Cohen in 1987. In this study, some students, though not many, reported that they came across at least one comment that was not understood. What is interesting here is that when these comments were analyzed, it was seen that they were mostly in single words or phrases like "confusing" or "not clear".

The teacher responses that were unclear to students were listed as follows, sometimes with students' comments:

"This could be clearer"

"Needs transition" (ST: 'I didn't understand this comment')

"Arrows" (ST: 'Not clear how to interpret them)

"Not clear" (ST: 'What isn't clear?)

"Confusing" (ST: What is confusing?)

"Avoid 100% statements" (Cohen, 1987, p.65).

(Note: ST stands for student.)

These samples of unclear comments indicated that the teacher used some vague statements with no explanations or examples (Cohen, 1987).

Cohen (1987) revealed a few strategies students used to respond to the teacher's feedback. The university students from various language classes and levels in the research noted their strategy as "making the mental note of the comments". Some other strategies which only a small number of students used were to write down some points, rewrite the paper by considering these points, refer to the previous papers, just to look over the corrections, and do nothing. Moreover, some students reported they combined two strategies; for example, they both referred to the previous papers and made a mental note.

When the strategies students employ in an EFL setting are considered the research showed that the students in the EFL university setting immediately consulted the teacher but they did not consult a grammar book, a peer student, or previous essays (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990).

To sum up, students may experience problems with written teacher response when the comments on content are too general or too specific, when the teacher uses symbols and grammar terms, and when the teacher provides his/her comments in phrases or single words which are vague and unclear for students. In these cases, as it

is presented in this section, students may consult the teacher for help, which shows that the students accept the teacher as the ultimate source of information.

Methods Used to Identify Cognitive Processes in Revising

One of the introspective research methods, the think-aloud protocol (TAP), is especially used as a data collection instrument when the participants' cognitive processes are the main topic of inquiry in a study. Second language research has parallels with other disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, and psychology in which informants' own statements are accepted as data. Introspective methods have in fact been borrowed from these disciplines as a result of the need to access to learners' processes and knowledge (Faerch & Kasper, 1987).

According to Brown and Rodgers' (2002) description, a think-aloud is where the report is concurrent with a given mental task but where the heeded information is not already linguistically encoded and thus requires linguistic encoding for verbalization. Describing what a corkscrew looks like would be an example (p.55).

In other words, the participants are given a task and required to verbalize everything that comes to their minds while dealing with the task. As the main concern is to get as much data from the participants as possible, the participants may be allowed to use their mother tongue. Anderson (1991) and Hosenfeld (1977, as cited in Swaffar, 1988) point out that the participants should be allowed to use their mother tongue so that the language issues will not be a problem getting the data.

The literature presents some studies in which TAPs were used, but as far as I have observed they were generally on reading and translation in the fields of EFL and ESL. Therefore, it is not easy to find many research studies on L2 writing in which

TAPs are used as a data collection instrument. One of these studies was done by Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990). They collected the data through the verbal reports of both the teachers and the students. The teachers were asked to verbalize their thoughts while giving written feedback to the students on their drafts, and the students were asked to verbalize their thoughts about the feedback they received.

Flower and Hayes (1981) also used TAPs in their study on the composing processes of student writers. They gave the writers a problem, and asked them to compose out loud. Flower and Hayes (1981) suggest that TAP is the best way to see what is going on in writers' minds while composing, in other words when they are in action.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on the process approach to writing, written teacher feedback, the types of feedback from various sources, such as peers and the teacher, and finally on the methods used to determine the mental processes in revising. Although some of the studies provide contradictory results, what is common is the undeniable influence of written teacher feedback in writing instruction. However, as there are not many studies which consider the teacher's written commentary from multiple perspectives or in an EFL setting, I aimed to fill the gap with the current study. I investigated the issue of responding to feedback not only from the teacher's but also from the students' perspective and compared them with each other all through the revising process. By providing an in-depth look at how students make sense of the teacher's comments I hope to contribute to the literature on written teacher feedback.

The following chapter gives information on the participants, instruments, the

data collection procedures, and the methods of data analysis used in this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is an attempt to identify the stages students go through while revising their drafts after getting written feedback from the teacher. The research questions addressed by this study are as follows:

1- To what extent do students understand and utilize the teacher's written response to

   a. sentence-level errors,

   b. content, and

   c. discourse?

2- What do students do when they cannot understand or interpret the teacher's comments?

3- To what extent do the students' revised drafts correlate with what the teacher has actually pointed out in the comments?

In this chapter, information about the participants involved in the study, the instruments used to collect the data, the data collection procedures followed, the methods of data analysis used is presented.

Participants

The study was conducted at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) School of Foreign Languages. At the preparatory school, students are divided into four levels according to their proficiency in English: A (Upper-Intermediate), B (Intermediate), C (Pre-intermediate), and D (Elementary). Students from the A level classes were

chosen for this study since the students in that group were more familiar with essay writing at the time the data was being collected. The other groups were still working at the paragraph level. There was only one volunteer teacher, and the students were chosen from her classes. Six volunteer students and their writing teacher participated in the study. The genders of the students or their success at writing were not considered as determining factors in choosing the students. As a result, there were both weak and strong writers in the study as reported by their teacher. The teacher had three years of writing instruction experience, and she was very interested in feedback issues in writing.

The writing teacher had taught the students writing and reading for 4 months, so they were quite familiar with the teacher's way of giving written feedback. I thought that working with a new teacher would affect the results of the study in a negative way as the students might need time to get used to a new style of written commentary even though there was a more or less standard way of teachers' responding to students' drafts at ITU School of Foreign Languages. That's why I worked with the students' own writing teacher.

Sources of Data

The main sources of data were the students' first and revised drafts. Apart from them, TAP -an introspective research tool- (see Chapter II) and interviews -a retrospective research tool- were used as the instruments to collect the data since these instruments were decided to be the most appropriate ones in such a study investigating students' actual use of written teacher commentary. The students were asked to verbalize their thoughts while revising their papers with the teacher's comments on their first drafts. Hence, it was possible to observe them throughout the

revising process. Later on, they were interviewed about the TAPs and writing in general. In addition, the teacher was also audio taped comparing the first and the revised versions in an attempt to answer the third research question, which aimed to discover to what extent the students' revised drafts correlated with what the teacher had actually pointed out in the comments.

The Students' First and Revised Drafts

The main sources of data in the study were the students' first and second drafts. The teacher's comments in the students' first drafts were analyzed and the comments were categorized according to the level they referred to such as content, sentence, and discourse. In addition to the various levels they referred to, the written teacher comments were also analyzed in terms of their location such as margins and end notes and ways of being presented, that is in symbols or in full sentences. The detailed analysis helped identify the teacher feedback the students had problems with.

The revised drafts were also analyzed by considering the revisions the students made. The revisions were compared with the teacher's comments in the first drafts to see whether the comments led to desired revisions, in other words whether the feedback achieved its aim.

Think-Aloud Protocols

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in order to observe the writers composing and revising processes, which are actually very difficult to observe, introspective research tools are preferred by researchers. Participants are required to verbalize everything that comes to their minds while dealing with the task given. However, before that, the participants are trained on TAPs to acquaint them with the procedures and tape recorders (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). During the real sessions,

they are tape or video recorded. Researchers tend to conduct these protocols with one participant at a time so as to create a less distracting atmosphere and let the researcher take notes when each participant is working on a specific task. Furthermore, the researcher is present since s/he is responsible to remind the participants to think aloud and talk should they keep silent for 15 seconds to 1 minute (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). Another advantage of the researcher's being present during the TAPs is that s/he can take notes not only on verbal but also on non-verbal information, which will provide richer data (Faerch & Kasper, 1987). As stated in the previous chapter, the participants should be allowed to use their mother tongue, so the language issues will not present a problem getting the data (Anderson, 1991; Hosenfeld, 1977 as cited in Swaffar, 1988). Later on, the researcher transcribes the recordings and translates it into L2.

<center>Retrospective Interviews</center>

Retrospective interviews are conducted after the introspective study. Brown and Rodgers' (2002) description of a retrospective study is:

> where the report is subsequent to a given mental task and where information consists of selected foci, descriptions, explanations, and interpretations. Reporting on the route by which you arrived at your present location would be an example (p.56).

This time the participants are required to report on what they have done during the introspective study. Following the TAPs, the researcher first analyzes the data and then talks to the participants as soon as possible because the participants may forget what they actually did while working on the task. The task used in the TAPs is provided for the participants to help them remember the necessary parts. The purpose

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is to get more information from the participants about some missing or unclear parts of the TAP procedure.

<center>Data Collection Procedures</center>

First of all, the permission from the ITU School of Foreign Languages was received in November, 2005 to conduct the pilot study in the first term and the actual one in the second term.

The pilot study was conducted with an A level student in November, 2005. In order not to affect the results of the actual study, which would be held with the ITU School of Foreign Languages students, the student in the pilot study was chosen from ITU-SUNY (The State University of New York) preparatory school groups. ITU students were not aware of the procedures in advance of the study. The written work the teacher commented on was one of the regular assignments. First, a training session on TAP was given to the student, and then she was asked to verbalize her thoughts and feelings constantly in her mother tongue, Turkish, while revising her draft. Her voice was recorded during the TAP, and the important parts were transcribed and translated into English. After the transcription, the student was provided with her drafts and interviewed about her reactions in case she had forgotten to mention some important parts to comment on during the TAP. Later on, the teacher compared the early and the later drafts to give information about the correlation between what the student did and what the teacher actually intended.

The actual study was conducted in five weeks in March, 2006. The teacher and the volunteer students were informed about the purpose and the procedures of the study. They were assured about confidentiality. The six volunteer students wrote extra essays, which were cause-effect or argumentative types as they had already worked

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on these genres before. The teacher responded to the drafts in a week and the students were called in for TAP. As the teacher reported, she did not change the way she gave written feedback according to the students' level of L2 proficiency. A ten minute training session was held for the students and the teacher first. Then, they were given their first drafts with teacher comments when they started the TAPs; that is, they were not given any extra time to have a look at their papers before the TAP since their actual responses to the comments and their actual use of them were the basic concerns of the study. The students were allowed to use their mother tongue so as to get all the information without making them worry about how to say something in English. The TAPs were conducted with one student at a time and notes were taken by the researcher during the sessions as well. Each session took about 10 to 25 minutes. The recordings were reviewed within a day, and the following day the retrospective interviews were held, again with one student at a time. These interviews were tape recorded, too. They were asked to write and submit the revised versions in a week.

Finally, the teacher compared the revised and first drafts of each student and she conducted TAP while comparing these. Her TAP was tape-recorded, and when it was necessary she was interviewed, too. She commented on the correlation between her comments and the revisions made.

The table below illustrates the whole structure of the study. It summarizes what the students, the teacher, and the researcher did in each week.

Table 1.

The Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3 & 4	Week 5
The student participants	They were assigned to write an essay.		They conducted their TAPs individually when they were given the teacher's comments. The students rewrote their essays.	
The teacher	The teacher suggested some topics.	The teacher commented on the students' papers		The teacher compared each student's first and revised drafts.
The researcher		She analyzed the written teacher commentary.	She gave individual training sessions on TAP. She was present during each TAP. She interviewed with the students individually after the TAPs.	She analyzed the teacher's comparison of the first and revised versions.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data gathered from the students' TAPs were fully transcribed, whereas the interviews and the teacher's TAP were transcribed selectively. As the teacher's TAP was already in English, only the students' TAPs and interviews were translated into English.

In addition, the teacher's handwritten commentary was categorized according to the frequency and aim of each kind of comment. In this way, while analyzing the students' TAPs, I could identify the parts which the students had problems with. Furthermore, this categorization helped to identify the useful, problematic or misleading comments for students when the changes the students made in their final drafts were analyzed by means of the teacher's TAP.

Conclusion

In this chapter on methodology, the basic components of the research study such as participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and the methods of data analysis were presented. The following chapters will give detailed information about the data analysis and the results reached.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The main concern of this study was to discover students' processing of written teacher feedback on their writing. It investigated whether students understand and utilize the teacher's sentence-level, content-level, and discourse-level commentary. The study also examined what students do when they cannot understand or interpret the teacher's written response to their texts. In addition, the study considered the correlation between the students' corrections in the revised versions and the teacher's actual purpose in giving her responses in the first drafts to see whether students could make use of the teacher's suggestions effectively or changed something just because they thought they were supposed to do so.

Six upper-intermediate level students and their writing teacher at the ITU School of Foreign Languages Department participated in the study. The students were assigned to write either a cause-effect or an argumentative essay. The teacher collected the essays the following week and turned back the drafts with her comments in a week. The additional data were collected through the students' TAPs that were tape recorded when the students were revising their drafts after being given the teacher's comments on their first drafts. They were then interviewed to clarify the confusing parts in their TAPs and to discover their general interpretative strategies when they had problems with the comments, such as not understanding them. The teacher also conducted TAP when comparing the first and the revised versions of the

students' drafts. The students' TAPs were all transcribed. On the other hand, the interviews and the teacher's TAP were transcribed selectively considering how the data they revealed related to the data gathered from the students' TAPs.

This chapter first presents a detailed analysis of written teacher commentary in order to give a clear picture of the areas students did not understand or utilize. It examines what composition aspects the teacher responded to and how she provided her comments. After that, the analysis of the students' TAPs, the retrospective interviews with the students, and the analysis of the comparison of the students' first and revised drafts by means of the teacher's and the students' TAPs are presented.

The Analysis of Written Teacher Commentary

The first step of the data analysis was cataloging the types of responses the teacher gave. The three main areas she commented on and the way she marked each level were analyzed. The teacher used the standard way of giving written feedback proposed by ITU School of Foreign Languages to the teachers. The last subsection comments upon the teacher's use of praise, criticism, and suggestion. The analysis of the written teacher commentary helped identify the places where students had problems understanding or interpreting the comments.

The Three Main Areas of the Teacher Commentary

When the students' drafts were analyzed in terms of the written teacher feedback they received, it was seen that the teacher used different patterns in response to different aspects of a composition. Three categories of teacher comments are examined: sentence-level, content-level, and discourse-level.

<u>Sentence-Level Commentary</u>

The sentence-level errors are the morphological, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical ones. The morphological errors include wrong usage of nouns and verbs. Incorrect use of verb tenses, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, articles and determiners, and noun endings (plural) can be considered as the errors in this category. The second category of sentence-level errors is lexical. The error patterns belonging to this group are informal usage, wrong word choice, and idiom and pronoun errors. The examples of syntactic errors are wrong sentence structures, run-ons, and fragments. Finally, there are mechanical errors marked in the students' papers. They show the punctuation and spelling errors. The teacher in this study commented on all of these areas in the students' compositions. There is an example below of the student's text and the teacher's corrections on sentence-level errors.

The student text (S6):

Various disease emerge. Such as cancer. Electromagnetic radiation cause also on plants a bad affect.

The teacher's (indirect) correction:

Various <u>disease</u> emerge. <u>Such as cancer</u>. Electromagnetic radiation <u>cause</u>
            Pl.   Frag.   WO
<u>also on plants a bad affect.</u>

(Note. "S" stands for "student", and each student is numbered. In the example above, the teacher used symbols and underlining to mark the sentence level errors.
Note. "pl" stands for "plural"; "Frag." Stands for "fragment"; "WO" stands for "wrong order".)

<u>Content-Level Commentary</u>

The content-level commentary is related to the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas supported in the essays. The teacher in the study always commented on the content-level issues in each student's draft, and they were usually positive. Although

the end notes were used to comment on content, the teacher sometimes used the

margins in order to be able to locate the parts she referred to.

Examples from the comments in the end notes:

(S3): Your ideas …are impressive!

(S4): Very good ideas.

Example from the comments in the margins:

(S4): Even if their parents think positivly, the other people's thoughts affact their lifes, too.

Tell how. Explain this more, it's a good point.

(Note: In the last example the teacher's markings on sentence-level errors are not included.)

<u>Discourse-Level Commentary</u>

The final issue taken into consideration and commented on in the students'

first drafts related to discourse-level areas like organization, coherence, and cohesion.

Anything which spoiled the flow of ideas, in other words the coherence, was marked

by the teacher. Students may sometimes forget about what they actually aim to tell

and use some sentences contradicting their purpose in writing. These kinds of errors

may confuse the reader, so the teacher in the study warned the students about this

danger with her comments. The students' attention was directed to the importance of

the rhetorical format they should be applying. Although there were not many

examples, the teacher also made some comments on cohesion, that is, grammatical

devices such as referent words (e.g., pronouns) and conjunctions which help maintain

the unity of the essay. The examples below illustrate the point.

The student text and the teacher's comment (S4):

> On the other hand, if the child didn't take a good education from his/her family, he/she can do a lot of mistakes.

This idea is a bit unrelated Omit it!

The student text and the teacher's comment (S2):

> We can see main effect of low on a person's life if we watch TV or read newspaper. Main affect if this can be said; physchological problems and low life quality of their children.

Combine the last two sentences. It'd be better then.

The Teacher's Way of Giving Feedback

As the features the teacher commented on in student texts were categorized as sentence-level, content-level, and discourse-level, the ways the teacher marked them were analyzed in three related categories.

The Teacher's Way of Giving Sentence-Level Feedback

There are two ways the teacher marked sentence-level errors:

Direct Correction   Indirect correction

Errors are located and corrected   Errors are both located and identified

Sometimes explanations are given   Errors are either coded or

                                                               Some verbal clues are given

The teacher sometimes preferred to correct the students' errors directly. She located the error and gave the correction. These were generally word order problems, unnecessary words, missing words, and wrong words. Here are some examples of the teacher's direct corrections:

The student text (S5):

> Most of people think that they help you and you would overcome your problems easier.

The teacher's direct correction:

> (When)
> Most ~~of~~ people think that ∧ they help you ~~and~~ you would overcome your
>
> problems easier.

The student text (S5):

> When you live alone you can understand what means problem.

The teacher's direct correction:

> (a)
> When you live alone you can understand what means (problem.)

The student text (S3):

> …because conditions are different either for educational opportunities or economic.

The teacher's direct correction:

> …because conditions are different <u>either for</u> educational (opportunities)
> (in terms of)
> (and)
> ~~or~~ economic.

There is also an example where the teacher herself made the correction and explained the reason why.

The student text (S1):

> …why don't you give up it now?

The teacher's direct correction:

…why don't you give up (it) now?

> If a phrasal verb is a separable one, when you are using it with a pronoun like 'he, she, and it', you should put the pronoun into the middle.

The indirect corrections include location and identification of the errors with a set of symbols. In some cases she gave some verbal clues for the errors. The symbols used in the data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

The Symbols for Coding the Sentence-Level Errors

Symbols	Explanation
WT	Wrong verb tense
WF	Wrong form
WP	Wrong preposition
WW	Wrong word
PL	Plural
P	Punctuation
SP	Spelling
ARG.	Subject-verb agreement
∧	Missing word mark
FRAG.	Fragment
GR	Grammar

Note. The table presents the coding symbols recommended to the writing teachers at ITU by the ITU School of Foreign Languages Department.

The students were informed about these symbols at least once. The following examples were taken from the students' first drafts as the examples of the teacher's way of giving indirect corrections.

The student text (S6):

These unconsicious of the technology is global warming…

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The teacher's indirect correction:

These <u>unconsicious</u> $\land$ of the technology is global warming…
            SP

The student text (S5):

By the another hand when I lived by my parents my mother was saying that: "you cant go to the places like pub and…."

The teacher's indirect correction:

<u>By the another hand</u> when I lived <u>by</u> my parents $\land$ my
       WW   WP   p

mother <u>was saying</u> that: "you <u>cant</u> go to the places like <u>pub</u> and….
      WT   P   Pl.
                 (make this sentence reported speech!)

The sentence-level errors were marked at their own location with the help of the symbols used to identify errors. The end note did not include anything about sentence-level problems. Neither did the margins. The teacher used the margins only to give some verbal clues about how to correct some specific errors. Apart from those clues, the margin notes were not used to refer to any sentence-level error. On the other hand, in one example the teacher used the margins, but just to praise the student's correct usage of the subjunctive form.

The student text and the teacher's comment (S3):

…it is urgent that essential importance be given to

our women…

| Excellent subjunctive! Very good to see that! |

The number of direct and indirect corrections on sentence-level errors used in each student's paper is presented in the table below. It gives a clear idea about the extent to which the teacher used them both.

Table 3.

The Teacher's Usage of the Direct and Indirect Corrections on Sentence-Level Errors

Student Participants	*IC	IC (%)	DC	DC (%)	Total
S1	15	71%	6	29%	21
S2	16	80%	4	20%	20
S3	19	61%	12	39%	31
S4	22	81%	5	19%	27
S5	33	57%	25	43%	58
S6	65	92%	6	8%	71

Note:
IC: The number of the teacher's indirect corrections on sentence-level errors.
IC (%): The percentage of the teacher's indirect corrections on sentence-level errors.
DC: The number of the teacher's direct corrections on sentence-level errors.
DC (%): The percentage of the teacher's direct corrections on sentence-level errors
Total: The number of the teacher's corrections on sentence-level errors.
* The indirect corrections in the sentences that the teacher suggested the student delete were included.

It can be deduced from the findings shown in Table 3 that the teacher's use of direct and indirect corrections changes from student to student.

To sum up, the teacher used both direct and indirect corrections for sentence-level errors, and she usually used symbols for indirect corrections. The end note and the margins were not used much to comment on sentence-level problems. When the numbers of direct and indirect corrections were considered in each student's paper, it was found that the number of indirect or direct corrections is not parallel with the total number of corrections on sentence-level errors. The next section is on the teacher's way of marking content-level features.

The Teacher's Way of Giving Content-Level Feedback

In contrast to the symbols used for marking sentence-level errors, the comments on content were presented in full sentences or short phrases in the end notes. The margins were not much used to comment on the ideas students supported. The sample below shows the teacher's comment on content in the margins: The student text with corrections and the teacher's margin note on content (S3):

> Even if their parents think positivly, the other people's
>   SP
> thoughts affact their lifes, too.
>   SP   SP

Tell how! Explain this more, it's a good point!

The teacher's comments in the end note covered everything; in other words the final note considered the text as a whole. The teacher referred to some specific paragraphs she wanted to talk about even though she did not put the comments next to the related paragraphs.

In a student's paper the teacher had some subtitles, and apart from commenting on the essay in general, she also gave feedback on how to improve each paragraph by pointing out the problems. The teacher's end note (S2):

> Intro: Good intro, but I think……
> Body paragraphs: the 1st is better than the 2nd. However,….
> Conclusion: I liked your final thought here, but…

In short, the teacher's comments on content were mostly positive. They were presented in phrases or in full sentences, and in the end notes or side notes. The following section is about how the teacher marked discourse- level features in the students' drafts.

<u>The Teacher's Way of Giving Discourse-Level Feedback</u>

The discourse-level features were marked in full sentences or phrases just like the content-level ones. The problems with cohesive devices, coherence, and organization were stated either in the marginal notes or in the end notes.

In the example below, the teacher warned the student about being consistent with the main idea she had stated before because those sentences were thought to disrupt the order of ideas, and so the coherence.

The teacher's margin note (S5):

> This part is hard to understand. I couldn't make the connection with your topic sentence.

In another example, presented below, the teacher explained what caused the coherence problem and the reason why.

The teacher's end note (S2):

> …I think you shouldn't mention "countries". This sounds a bit unrelated since you are focusing on people's lives and their poverty, not the countries' poverty.

The lack of connectors as cohesive devices was also emphasized by the teacher in the end comment. Here is an example:

The teacher's end note (S2):

> You should use more "sentence connectors" in both of them.

(Note: 1st and the 2nd body paragraphs are referred to with "both of them")

To sum up, the teacher's way of marking the discourse level features is not totally different from her way of marking content-level ones, but the number of comments on discourse is higher than the number of comments on content.

Apart from the three areas in an essay the teacher commented on (sentence, content, and discourse) and her way of marking each type, the use of praise, criticism, and suggestion in her comments is also worth mentioning. The following section is about the teacher's use of them.

<u>The Teacher's Use of Praise, Criticism, and Suggestion</u>

The teacher usually started her comments with praise in her end notes. However, the rest of the comments were ordered differently. It either went on with criticism and suggestion, suggestion and criticism, or just with suggestion.

Since the end notes mostly included comments on content and discourse, the praise, criticism, suggestion triad can be considered to be referring to the content and discourse issues in the texts. The examples below illustrate the point:

The teacher's end note (S2):

<u>I liked your final thought here</u>, <u>but it looks like a Turkish</u>
   (praise)   (criticism)

<u>translation</u>. <u>Try to revise it.</u>
    (Suggestion)

The teacher's end note (S6):

<u>Overall good organization</u>. <u>However, it's too long!</u> <u>You have to</u>
   (praise)   (criticism)

<u>simplify your body paragraphs by omitting some ideas and sentences.</u>
   (Suggestion)

Just two supporting details and examples are enough for these…

The teacher's end note (S3):

> Your essay is excellent!...Your ideas and the way you put them into sentences
> are really impressive!
> (Praise)
>
> All you have to do is to find more general topic sentences for your body
> paragraphs.
> (Suggestion)
>
> The existing ones are specific and you can still use them as supporting
> examples after you write the more general topic sentences!
> (Criticism + Suggestion)

On the other hand, it was observed that the teacher gave positive comments on sentence-level issues in the margins as well even though these examples were not many.

The student text with the teacher's comment (S3):

> …it is urgent that essential importance be given to our women…

> Excellent subjunctive!
> Very good to see that!

In the margins, there were sometimes some positive comments on a specific paragraph. The teacher's comments below were placed next to the paragraphs they referred to.

The teacher's comments (S3):

> Excellent introduction!

> Excellent and impressive conclusion!

In short, it is obvious that the teacher used praise, criticism, and suggestion in her comments. She was careful about beginning her comments with praise. Another point to consider is that she used praise, suggestion, and criticism to mark discourse and content.

Now that the teacher's comments have been analyzed in detail in this section, we turn to the students' interpretation and utilization of them in the next section of this chapter.

<div align="center">The Analysis of the Students' TAPs</div>

The TAPs were conducted when the students received the teacher's feedback for the first time. As they had already been trained on the procedure on the same day, they immediately started to check their papers and the teacher's comments. However, they were not asked to rewrite the whole essay during the TAPs. While they were being tape recorded, they just read but did not respond to the comments and their papers. The following week, they turned their papers back after rewriting the whole essay. This was their productive stage of using the feedback since they were required to rewrite their essays. As a consequence, the first research question in the study was answered both by using the students' verbal data and the teacher's, which she provided while comparing the first and the second drafts. The data transcribed were then translated into English and analyzed. The results will be presented in three categories according to the levels marked by the teacher in the first drafts: sentence-level, content-level, and discourse-level.

<div align="center">The Students' Use of Sentence-Level Commentary</div>

The analysis of the TAPs showed that the written teacher feedback on sentence-level errors was not always utilized or understood by the students. There are two different types of data as a result of the two different markings on sentence-level errors: direct and indirect.

The Students' Use of the Teacher's Direct Corrections on Sentence-level Errors

When the teacher gave direct corrections, the students generally accepted the corrected versions without any questioning. They sometimes did not even mention those parts and skipped them during the TAPs. The examples below show the students' attitude toward the teacher's direct corrections.

The student text and the teacher's direct correction (S3):

Women in an eastern city just learn giving birth to a child or carrying out

what men say.

(the men's orders)

The related transcription from the TAP (S3):

At the end of the first body paragraph there is something to change. OK. I'll write down "the men's orders" as the teacher told.

The student text and the teacher's direct correction (S5):

You can go to anywhere and also when you want.

(whenever)

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

(She directly skipped the words deleted by the teacher, "to" and "and also".) "whenever you want". I made a mistake here. (She accepted "whenever" immediately).

As can be deduced from these two examples, the students immediately accepted the teacher's direct corrections of the sentence-level errors. They did not think about why those changes should be made or what the new versions of those sentences were. Especially when the teacher deleted some extra words, the students did not mention them in the TAPs. In some other cases, some students reread the sentences after they had made the necessary changes, but this did not happen very often. The reason for their acceptance may be that they see the teacher as the ultimate

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authority. They are ready to give the responsibility for their texts to the teacher

because they believe an essay is perfect when there are no grammatical errors.

There was only one example where the student disagreed with the teacher's

direct correction.

The student text and the teacher's direct correction (S2):

There are lots of people who has no money all over the world.

The related transcription from the TAP (S2):

The teacher has changed the location of "all over the world", but I have seen it somewhere in the internet. It was again at the end of the sentence, so I think it's OK here, at the end.

While in all the other cases the students did not state any disagreement with the

teacher as they accepted the teacher as the ultimate source, here this student refused to

change his version and supported his idea by saying that it was used in that way in the

internet. The internet seems to be in competition with the teacher's prestige in the

eyes of the students.

Another interesting finding about the teacher's direct correction is that the

students sometimes felt uneasy when the teacher not only corrected the errors but also

explained the reasons for the changes.

The student text and the teacher's direct correction (S1):

…why don't you give up it now?

If a phrasal verb is a separable one, when you are using it with a pronoun like 'he, she, and it', you should put the pronoun into the middle.

The related transcription from the TAP (S1):

> "give it up" OK great, a silly mistake. (She reads the comment) "If a phrasal verb is a separable one when you are using it with a pronoun like 'he-she-it'..."OK, OK I do know it of course. The teacher needn't have explained this rule.

> One of the participants once found an alternative correction to the teacher's.

However, she preferred to use the teacher's version instead of her own in the revised

draft.

The student's first draft with the teacher's direct and indirect corrections (S5):

> (when)
> Most ~~of~~ people think that ∧ they help you…

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

> Umm… yes, yes "when! they help you and you would overcome your problems easier" Or I can use "if" instead of "when", it would be better. Yes, right. (The teacher has added the word "when").

> The analysis of another student's TAP revealed that when there were both

indirect and direct corrections in the same sentence for different items, the student

tended to check the teacher's direct correction first. In the example below, she did not

mention the two indirect corrections, but went on with the answer presented by the

teacher.

The student text with the teacher's direct and indirect corrections (S6):

> Whole improvements must be <u>in</u> <u>big</u> control <u>for obstructing happening</u>
>   WP WW   (to prevent a bad situation)
> <u>a bad situation.</u>

The related transcription from the TAP (S6):

> (reads the whole sentence but ignores the two symbols. Interested in the teacher's direct correction.) "to prevent a bad situation". Ohh… yes the teacher presented another alternative I guess.

The Students' Use of the Teacher's Indirect Corrections on Sentence-level Errors

It can be said that the indirect corrections were a bit difficult for students to use. There were times they skipped or did not understand some comments. The table below presents the percentages of the students' usage of indirect corrections in their TAPs.

Table 4.

The Students' Use of the Teacher's Indirect Corrections on the Sentence-Level Errors.

Student Participants	*IC	IC-TAPs	IC-TAPs (%)
S1	15	14	93%
S2	16	12	75%
S3	19	18	95%
S4	22	18	82%
S5	33	21	64%
S6	65	43	66%

Note.
IC: The number of the teacher's indirect corrections.
IC-TAPs: The number of indirect corrections mentioned by the students in their TAPs.
IC-TAPs: The percentages of the indirect corrections mentioned by the students in the TAPs.
* The indirect corrections in the sentences that the teacher suggested the student delete were included.

The percentages in the table above show to what extent the students used the sentence-level indirect comments the teacher gave in their first drafts. The data in the third column have been gathered through the analysis of the students' TAPs. The teacher's indirect corrections have been counted first, and then the ones which the students did not skip have been added to the third column so that the calculation of the percentages can be clear.

When the percentages of the parts that the students considered in the TAPs to the total number of the indirect corrections made by the teacher are compared, it is

seen that as the number of the teacher's indirect corrections increased, the students considered the teachers indirect corrections less. For example, the first three students received fewer indirect corrections, and they considered almost all of those corrections, whereas the other three students received more indirect corrections, but they considered them less often. The reason behind this attitude is very important. The common points about skipped parts will provide some explanations.

The most striking common point in all the participants' TAPs was that they ignored some symbols or verbal clues when there were more than a few things to correct in one sentence. Even if the students started to comment on the corrections from the beginning and went on stating them one by one, at some point they got confused and did not recognize that there were some other markings as exemplified below:

The student text and the teacher's corrections (S3):

<div align="center">(and educated)</div>

… <u>have</u> ∧ chance to be cultured ∧ and financially independent…
    WF

The related transcription from the TAP (S3):

> "have" ummm… I'm not sure but I think it means wrong form. Should it be "had", not sure. I don't understand it, and I don't know how to correct it. Anyway,..
> (She apparently didn't notice the tick after "have" while thinking about the wrong form.)
> "cultured and educated". OK I'll add "and educated".

Another common problem is that the students immediately became interested in the teacher's direct correction even if there were some indirect corrections. Then they apparently forget to have a look at the indirect ones, or they did not feel the need to correct each error in one sentence as demonstrated in the example below.

The student text and the teacher's corrections (S6):

Whole improvements must be <u>in</u> <u>big</u> control <u>for obstructing happening a</u>

                                WP WW   (to prevent bad situation)

a bad situation)

The related transcription from the TAP (S6):

(She reads the whole sentence but ignores the two symbols. She is interested in the teacher's direct correction.) "to prevent a bad situation". Ohh… yes the teacher presented another alternative I guess.

There are also some specific cases to interpret in the TAPs. The fifth participant ignored one of the indirect corrections although she started to comment on each correction in the sentence from the beginning. The whole sentence was also underlined. At the end of the line, there was a margin note, so when she saw it, she immediately read it and forgot the order she had been following. She skipped one of the marks in that way. Here is the part discussed above:

The student text with the teacher's direct and indirect corrections (S5):

You <u>cant</u> go to places like <u>pub</u> and you must come t̶o̶

         P   Pl

home early.

                                                Make this sentence reported speech!

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

"you can't go", oh I said "can't" instead of "can not". No no no, I did not use the apostrophe.
"places like pub and …" " make this sentence reported speech" (She reads the margin comment). I should write the sentence in reported speech.
"come to, come home early". I don't need "to" here.

The most commonly skipped indirect comment was one of the symbols, "∧ ", the missing word mark, then came the symbol for punctuation, "P". The reason why all the students skipped the missing word mark and punctuation at least once may be

that the mark was not that obvious and they did not think that punctuation errors were serious.

Apart from skipping some indirect corrections, the students sometimes did not understand or interpret the symbols as in the example below.

The related transcription from the TAP (S6):

I see these marks all through the paper, but I don't understand what they mean. Maybe they indicate that there is something missing. (She is referring to the missing word mark)

In the following example, the student considered the symbols, but he misinterpreted the symbol "WT" (wrong tense). Although the teacher tried to refer to the tense error, the student thought about finding a more suitable word for "start".

The student text and the teacher's indirect corrections (S2):

<u>By the time</u> the person <u>will start</u> hating everything.
   WW   WT

The related transcription from the TAP (S2):

"will start" I think I should have used another word for "start", like "begin". That must be the reason why the teacher has underlined it.

All of these findings resulting from the analysis of the students' TAPs revealed that it was up to the type of correction whether the students gave attention to the corrections or not. They did not even think about the teacher's direct corrections, whereas they put much more effort to understand the indirect ones. Furthermore, it was obvious that when the direct and indirect corrections were used together in the same sentence for different items, the students did not care much about correcting the errors which had been responded to by indirect corrections by the teacher. Finally, it can be asserted that the students had problems understanding and interpreting the symbols used for indirect corrections.

The results of the students' TAPs will be compared to the data gathered from the teacher's TAP, in which the first and the revised versions were compared in the following sections of this chapter. This will allow us to discuss whether the students skipped, misinterpreted, or did not understand the same parts at the rewriting stage. The other concern in the study was the students' use of the comments on content, which will be considered in the following section.

<center>The Students' Use of Content-Level Commentary</center>

The teacher's comments on content-level issues were the most neglected part by the students, especially when these comments were written in the margins. The students were so busy with sentence-level commentary that they either could not recognize the comments in the margins or just read them and went on with the sentence-level feedback. The example below illustrates this point.

The student text with the teacher's comments (S4):

> Even if their parents think <u>positivly</u>, the other people's
>   SP
> thoughts <u>affact</u> their <u>lifes</u>, too…∧Only way to have your
>   SP   SP
>
> space and house, is <u>getting</u> married.
>   P   WF

> Tell how!
> Explain this
> more, it's a
> good point!

The related transcription from the TAP (S4):

> Oh! I used the verb form. "Lives" umm…. Tell how. "Explain this more, it's a good point." (Long pause) puff… I have to take my time and think about this. I cannot correct it immediately. "Getting". Wrong form. Umm…

In this example, the participant did not think about what she was supposed to do. She was concerned with the wrong form and spelling errors in that sentence and the following one. She mentioned that she could not easily understand and utilize this comment on content. This example shows us that sentence-level errors are the most

serious ones for students, and students assume that content-level errors take more time

to correct.

In another case, the participant did not even read or consider the comment in

the margin.

The student text with the teacher's comments (S5):

> Everyone knows me can guess what will be
> my behavior for anything because I'm stabilized.
> Being stabilized is an automatic effect of living ideas
> of only one brain. I will not say nobody,
> this is my life style anymore.

This part is hard to understand.

(Note. The teacher's markings on sentence-level errors have been omitted to focus the attention on the margin comment.)

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

> (She skipped the comment in the margin and went on dealing with sentence-level errors)

Although the teacher tried to call attention to the same problematic part by referring to

it again in the end note, the participant read another comment in the margin.

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

> (She reads the end comment.) "I liked your essay! Especially the organization is good" Ohh that's great!! It's nice to hear that. "You should only add a final thought to your conclusion and revise the first body paragraph, especially the last sentences I showed." Oh yes yes. She's talking about the sentence I stole from the Metallica's song. I think she refers to that one. "Life is ours and we live it on our own way". (She starts reading the margin notes next to that line) "Place it somewhere else maybe as a final thought". No no, she does not refer to that line. Umm… she wants me to write more in the conclusion paragraph, but she says she has showed. Ummm…. I can't find it. I'm confused. Anyway, that's OK.

S5 was very confused while interpreting the teacher's comment. She could not be sure

where the marginal comments belonged to and when she should consider them. She

turned back and forth to the sentence-level errors. Finally, she skipped one of the

marginal comments as shown in the example above. Even when she was directed to

the same comment again in the end note, she could not make up her mind. As a result, she could not make use of the comment during the TAP.

In the other examples the teacher mostly praised the ideas the participants presented in their essays, and these comments were usually in the end note.

(S4): Very good ideas

(S1): Very good ideas

(S2): I liked your final thought.

(S3): Your ideas and the way you put them into sentences are really

impressive!

During the TAPs, the students were observed to be happy with these positive comments on their ideas. In the retrospective interviews, the participants were asked about their ways of using content-level feedback. The final subsection is about how much students understood and utilized the teacher's comments on discourse-level issues.

The Students' Use of Discourse-Level Commentary

The second group of most important comments for the students includes discourse level issues, that is, organization, cohesion, and coherence. The students in the study showed interest especially in organizational issues during the TAPs. In the end notes the teacher not only mentioned the problems but also tried to show them how to correct the errors. There were both praise and suggestion in criticizing the discourse-level features. As a result of there being both praise and suggestions, the students took them seriously, perhaps because they were guided well.

Examples:

The teacher's end comment (S6):

> Overall, good organization. However, it's too long! You have to simplify your body paragraphs by omitting some ideas and sentences. Just two supporting details and examples are enough for these, you know. Thank you!

The related transcription from the TAP (S6):

> (She reads the end comment). Umm… the teacher has found my essay too long. But I actually tried to write something long on purpose. She says because it is too long it is difficult to understand. OK. Umm… (She reads the rest of the comment). OK I can delete some parts.

Not only in the end note did the teacher mention her comments on discourse-level features; she also used the margins, but generally to show her positive attitude toward some specific paragraphs. These were located just next to the paragraph they referred to.

Examples from the teacher's end notes:

> Very good intro!
>
> Good conclusion!
>
> Excellent and impressive conclusion!

Whether in the margins or in the end note, the participants read all the comments on discourse; however, there were some confusing parts which did not let them utilize the comments well during the TAPs. For example, four of the participants, whom the teacher criticized and gave suggestions to on discourse-level features in the end note, misinterpreted the teacher's comments. They read them one by one in detail, and they thought about them, too, but they ended up with very different solutions from what the teacher suggested. The examples below illustrate the point.

The teacher's end note (S3):

> Your essay is excellent! I really want to thank for it. Your ideas and the way you put them into sentences are really impressive! All you have to do is to find more general topic sentences for your body paragraphs. The existing ones are specific and you can still use them as supporting examples after you write the more general topic sentences!

The related transcription from the TAP (S3):

> (She reads the end comment). "…general topic sentences..." OK. OK. I see. I think in the first body paragraph there should be more general ideas. I think the content is a little bit weak. OK. I'll work on it.
> (She goes on reading the end comment). "The existing ones are specific and you can…as supporting examples" OK. she says my supporting sentences are good. (Wrong interpretation) "…after you write the more general topic sentences. Thank you" OK. I thank you.
> To sum up, I'll change the first body paragraph, it will be more general. My supporting sentences are good. OK.

Here, in this example, the student misinterpreted the comment. Although the teacher tried to point out the weaknesses of her topic sentences, she misinterpreted it, and thought that the teacher found her supporting sentences good.

In this extract below, it is obvious that the student confused the verbs "combine" and "compare".

The teacher's end note (S2):

> Intro: Also, if you combine the last two sentences of that paragraph, your thesis statement will sound better.

The related transcription from the TAP (S2):

> Then, umm…the teacher told me to compare the last two sentences in the introduction to have a better thesis statement. I know that I really made a mistake in those sentences, but I was too lazy to correct. (laughs)

In the following example, the student misinterpreted the comment as she could not decide what part of the essay the teacher exactly pointed out.

The student text and the teacher's marginal comment (S5):

Everyone knows me can guess what will be my behavior for because I'm stabilized. Being stabilized is an automatic effect of living ideas of only one brain. I will not say nobody, this is my life style anymore.

> I couldn't make the connection with your topic sentence.

The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

(She reads the end comment.) "I liked your essay! Especially the organization is good" Ohh that's great!! It's nice to hear that. "You should only add a final thought to your conclusion and revise the first body paragraph, especially the last sentences I showed." Oh yes yes. She's talking about the sentence I stole from the Metallica's song. I think she refers to that one. "Life is ours and we live it on our own way". (She starts reading the margin notes next to that line) "Place it somewhere else maybe as a final thought". No no, she does not refer to that line. Umm… she wants me to write more in the conclusion paragraph. But she says she has showed. Ummm…. I can't find it. I'm confused. Anyway, that's OK.

In one case, the student mentioned that he did not agree with the teacher's comment. He expressed what he thought while writing those parts.

The teacher's comment in the end note (S2):

Body paragraphs: The first is better than the second. However, you should use more "sentence connectors" in both of them.
In the second body, your topic sentence focuses on the effect of poverty on "children's life". However, you just give one example from education. You should give another example other than education. Otherwise, your topic sentence and supporting sentences in this paragraph will not complete each other.

The related transcription from the TAP (S2):

The second paragraph seemed to be better to me though it was shorter. The teacher told me to give more examples from education. I didn't give more examples because I thought the paragraph would be off topic if I mentioned education. My purpose here was just to tell what poverty caused in life. If I had told more about education, then it would be confusing.

In short, as these examples indicate, if a comment is not clearly connected with the part of the text they refer to, the students may have difficulty locating the error

and may be misled. Moreover, it can be deduced from the examples that it is important to comment on only one aspect of a text at a time. When each kind of issue is pointed out at the same time, then the students may get confused and not utilize the comments even if they tend to do so.

<center>The Analysis of the Interviews with the Students</center>

The retrospective interviews conducted subsequent to the TAPs have provided some results for the study, especially for the second research question, which is about the students' strategies when they cannot understand or interpret the teacher's comments. The participants were interviewed one by one on the day following the TAPs. The interviews were all in Turkish. They were provided with their own papers so as to remind them about the parts I wanted to talk about. All the interviews were tape recorded, and the relevant parts were transcribed and translated into English. Some technical terms such as "discourse" and "margin notes" were not directly used but simplified considering the students' levels. When the participants could not identify what they usually did while revising, they were guided with some questions referring to the specific examples in their own papers. The questions asked to each participant are listed below.

- "Here you said you did not understand what the teacher meant in the comments. What are the steps you follow in these cases? Do you ask for someone's help or leave that part as it is?"
- "Which parts of the teacher's comments in this paper do you find confusing?"
- "When you disagree with the teacher's comment, what will you do? In your paper, for example…"

There are also a few questions asked in the interviews to the students to find out their general attitude toward writing, as that may affect their approach to the written teacher response.

- "What is more important to you, feedback on sentence-level errors, content, or discourse? Why?"

- "Do you think written teacher feedback improves your writing skills?"

- "Do you think positive comments build your confidence in writing?"

In response to the question of the strategies they used when they did not understand the teacher's feedback, the students stated the steps they followed to solve the problems. Since they were alone while reading the comments for the first time and verbalizing their thoughts during the TAPs, they did not have any chance to apply strategies such as asking the teacher or consulting a dictionary. That is why this question was directed to them, to find out the answer to the second research question. All the students mentioned that they first thought about the comment on their own. Here are the answers they gave to the question:

> (Int.): Here you said you did not understand what the teacher meant in the feedback, what are the steps you follow in these cases? Do you ask for someone's help or leave that part as it is?

Students' answers:

> (S5): I first give myself some time. I try to sort it out on my own.
> If I cannot solve the problem, then I'll ask someone around, the teachers or classmates. I can consult a dictionary or grammar book, too.

> (S3): I first try to understand it on my own. I may use the internet, a dictionary or a grammar book for help. If I still don't understand, I'll ask the teacher.

> (S6): I'll think about it first. I consider my previous essays to see if I have done the same mistake before. If I cannot figure out the problem, I'll directly ask the teacher because she's the best source of information in class. If she refuses to help me, I'll ask my friends. If I cannot get the answer, I won't try anymore.

(S1): I always try to sort out the problems on my own. When I cannot do it, I'll go to the teacher.

(Note. "Int" stands for the interviewer.)

Although the students' effort to understand the confusing parts is encouraging, their acceptance of the teacher as the second option to consult is interesting. They assume that the teacher is the ultimate source of information. What is more interesting is that even if they said they immediately asked the teacher when they could not understand a comment, some of them stated that they would never consult the teacher for the content-level commentary.

Example:

(S3): I never ask the teacher about her comments on content. I just read and think about her comments, but it doesn't mean I'll change my ideas. It's my idea, isn't it? How can I change my own point of view with a comment?

The students tended to talk to the teacher to express their ideas one more time in more detail. They thought they could convince the teacher about their ideas they supported if they talked to her.

Examples:

(S5): Sometimes the teacher writes a comment on my ideas, but I think that's because she cannot understand what I mean. Then, I'll definitely talk to the teacher.

(S2): When I think that the teacher cannot understand me, I'll talk to her.

How much importance the students gave to sentence, content, and discourse-level feedback determined their strategies in solving the problems that were referred to by the teacher. Even if the teacher stated that there was a problem with the content, they preferred not to be convinced but to convince the teacher about their own way of thinking. Yet, when they did not understand the teacher's sentence-level or discourse-

level commentary, they immediately took these into consideration and applied more strategies to sort out the problems. There may be two reasons for this attitude. First, they may all think that sentence and discourse-level issues are more important than the content. Second, it may be difficult for them to change the content because if they change the content-level items, then they may have to change the whole essay related to them, and they think it is useless and tiring because there are more serious things to work on in the essay such as grammar, organization, and vocabulary. Their negative attitude toward content-level comments is clear in their answers to the question: "What is more important to you, feedback on sentence-level errors, content, or discourse? Why?"

Examples:

> (S1): Grammar and vocabulary are more important. Spelling is not that much important
>
> (S6): Sometimes I don't care much about the teacher's comments on the contents of my essays. If I consider them, then I may have to write down the whole essay from the beginning, I will have to change some other things in the essay according to that change. As a result, I naturally prefer not to do any change in the content.
> I pay much more attention to sentence-level errors because my vocabulary is weak. However, though they are sentence-level issues, I don't care much about the spelling and punctuation as I always forget them later on.
>
> (S5): Vocabulary and organization are the most important things in an essay, I think. Spelling and punctuation, for instance, are not serious mistakes. I make these errors because I write very fast.
>
> (S3): Everything is important, but it is too difficult to make changes in the content according to the teacher's comments.

These attitude questions have provided some logical explanations to the question of how much they utilize the teacher's written comments. The students reported that the written feedback the teacher gave was very important because it helped them see

their morphological and lexical errors. They said that even if they sometimes could not correct them, it was better to see them all marked. Here is an example below from the interviews.

> (S6): The teacher must mark all the sentence-level errors in my paper. It's up to me whether to consider them or not. I'd better see my most frequent errors. Then, I can be more careful about them when writing the subsequent essays. It really improves my writing skills.

The following example also shows that the students found written teacher response useful.

> (S1): Getting feedback from the teacher has improved my writing skills a lot because the number of my errors in my papers has decreased.

Although they found feedback on sentence-level errors useful, they all stated that content-level feedback did not help much. They tended to insist on control of their ideas.

> (S5): How am I expected to change my ideas? People may have different ideas about the same thing, but nobody can say that the other's ideas are nonsense. That's my idea, OK?

There are some other reasons why they find feedback on content useless. One is that it is difficult for them to change an idea stated anywhere in the text since that change may affect the text as a whole, and then they may have to change the whole essay as shown in the example below.

> (S6): Sometimes I don't care much about the teacher's comments on the contents of my essays. If I consider them, then I may have to write down the whole essay from the beginning, and I will have to change some other things in the essay according to that change. As a result, I naturally prefer not to make any changes in the content.

As a result, it was discovered that when the students were asked whether written teacher feedback improved their writing skills or not, they talked about improving grammar and vocabulary, but not improving the content.

In the interviews, the students were also asked about their strategies when they disagreed with the teacher's comments. The students stated that if the teacher says something, it is absolutely right.

Examples:

(S2): If the teacher says so, it's definitely right.

(S6): If she says something, that's definitely right.

The students' positive reaction to the teacher's positive comments in their texts in the TAPs leads to a question in the interviews about the place of praise in written teacher feedback. They all agreed that positive feedback was encouraging, and it built their confidence in writing.

(S3): I really like getting positive feedback. It's encouraging for me.

On the other hand, they also said that only positive feedback had no use.

(S2): I get happy when I see something positive in my paper, but I don't mean that I don't like negative comments. Of course, I should be warned about my errors. If the teacher always writes positive things, then there is no reason to get feedback from the teacher.

One of the students mentioned another aspect. She said that it was better to know their strengths as well as their weaknesses since they could be more aware of the parts they should be more careful about in the following essays.

(S5): The teacher must definitely mention the parts I'm good at. Then, I can balance the importance I pay for each. For example, if I'm not good at writing the introduction paragraph but the body paragraphs, I'll be more careful while writing the introduction.

The question about the parts they did not understand in the teacher's comments helped identify the problematic areas for the students. The students sometimes mentioned that they could not understand some specific parts in the teacher's comments during the TAPs, and in the interviews they all reported that

symbols were confusing and difficult to understand even though the teacher had

informed them about all the symbols.

Example:

(Int.): Which parts of the teacher's comments in this paper do you find confusing?

(S3): I couldn't understand what "WP" stood for.

(Int.): Do you mean these symbols? (referring to the student's own first draft)

(S3): Yes. "a-g-r" is another one I didn't understand, but it's my fault because the teacher had explained all of these symbols to us before.

Here are the other answers to the same question:

(S5): "W-W" for example, I don't know what it is, so I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

(S2): I sometimes don't understand what the symbols mean such as "S-P", but it's my fault because the teacher had told us. Furthermore, I don't understand why the teacher underlines some words.

In the last sample extract above, the student mentioned the underlined parts as

the confusing ones. The teacher just located but did not identify the error, so the

student had difficulty interpreting and utilizing those markings.

Only one of the students, (S1) said she had no problems understanding the

teacher's comments.

(S1): The teacher's feedback is generally clear and easy to understand. She has told us about the symbols, so I'm familiar with them.

In short, the interviews helped identify the students' general attitudes toward

writing and their strategies in solving their problems with written teacher

commentary. It was observed that the most important comments for the students were

on sentence-level, then on discourse and content. They did not like to leave sentence-

level errors uncorrected, but it was not the same for content level problems. While

their first strategy for sentence-level commentary was to think about them, and then to ask the teacher or a peer student, they did not ask for anybody else's help with the content-level and discourse-level feedback. The reasons they stated were that it was difficult to change the content of an essay, the teacher did not understand what they meant, and the discourse-level problems could be handled easily by means of the teacher's suggestions in her comments.

The Comparison of the Students' TAPs and the Interviews

When the students' TAPs and the interviews were compared, it was observed that there were some differences in terms of a few aspects.

First, we come up with some different parts the students were confused about. Although they were observed to have difficulty understanding and interpreting some comments, they did not mention these in the interviews since they were still not aware that they had problems with those parts. For instance, one of the students could not identify which part of the text the teacher's comment belonged to. The correction actually belonged to the following sentence in the next line, but the student thought it belonged to the previous sentence. In fact, in the previous sentence there was an indirect correction since the teacher just put a missing word mark, but in the following sentence she used direct correction. She wrote the missing words at the wrong location.

The student text and the teacher's correction (S5):

Nobody can meddle ∧your life when you live alone……
                    (to you)
Nobody will you say∧you must come back that time

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The related transcription from the TAP (S5):

> It is said that "to" is wrong here. "Nobody can meddle..." I don't understand what the teacher meant. "To you", ohh… "to you", I should have written "to you". It should be "nobody can meddle to you" not "your life".Umm…

Second, the students misunderstood the end comments. The wrong interpretations were discussed in the previous sections.

The teacher's comments in the end note (S2):

> Body paragraphs: The first is better than the second. However, you should use more "sentence connectors" in both of them.
> In the second body, your topic sentence focuses on the effect of poverty on "children's life". However, you just give one example from education. You should give another example other than education. Otherwise, your topic sentence and supporting sentences in this paragraph will not complete each other.

The related transcription from the TAP (S2):

> The second paragraph seemed to be better to me though it was shorter. The teacher told me to give more examples from education. I didn't give more examples because I thought the paragraph would be off topic if I mentioned education. My purpose here was just to tell what poverty caused in life. If I had told more about education, then it would be confusing.

These problems were not mentioned by the students in the interviews as the confusing parts of the teacher's written feedback, which can be accepted as evidence showing that they did not recognize these in the rewriting stage, either.

Finally, the students' strategies when they disagreed with the teacher's comments were stated in the TAPs and in the interviews, but with an interesting difference. In a few cases in the TAPs the students were not sure whether to accept the teacher's comment or not because they insisted on seeing the specific usages of some terms the teacher marked as wrong in the internet and in the course books. However, in the interviews even these students stated that they always agreed with the teacher's comments.

The Comparison of the Students' First and Revised Drafts

through the Students' and the Teacher's TAPs

The last part of the data analysis considers not only the students' TAPs but also the teacher's TAP, conducted while comparing each student's first and revised drafts. Each time, she read her end comments first. Then she had a general look at the paper to see what she expected the student to do in the revised draft. After that, for each student, she started reading the second draft line by line and also turned back to the first draft at the same time in order to be able to see to what extent the students considered her comments and to what extent they had successfully revised the first versions in accordance with these comments. She audio taped her comments, and the recordings were transcribed selectively. The comparison will be presented again under three headings as the revisions made on sentence-level, content-level, and discourse-level.

Sentence-Level Revisions

The teacher's comments on sentence-level errors are the ones that were considered by the students almost all the time. These markings almost always brought about some changes in the second drafts. However, there is still a distinction between the indirect and direct corrections in terms of the changes made in the revised versions.

Direct corrections

The teacher in her TAP mentioned that the students in the study tended to make the necessary changes she marked directly almost 100%. Yet, she stated her concerns about giving and not giving direct corrections. She said the students used but did not pay much attention to these corrections because they just rewrote those parts

and went on with the other marks even without questioning why the teacher had

changed that specific part. The following is an example from the teacher's TAP on

this issue.

The teacher's TAP:

> I write the correct answer somewhere, but in another place I may forget to do
> the same for the same kind of error. However, they do not notice it
> themselves. They do not feel any responsibility for their own texts. In S5's
> paper for example, I deleted 'to' before 'anywhere'. OK. She omitted that
> word in the revised version, but umm… here in the same paragraph, there is
> again the same wrong usage. She wrote 'I will go to anywhere'. When I look
> at the first draft I see that I wanted her to add a word after 'go to', but she
> should have been able to notice that it was wrong not to delete 'to' here. I'm
> sure she thought that I would have deleted that 'to' if it had been necessary.
> As you see, they do not even read my direct corrections and make use of them.
> They just try to save the day."

The related text and transcription:

The student's first draft with the teacher's corrections (S5):

> 1. You can go ~~to~~ anywhere.
>
> 2. In short, I will go to ∧ I will talk about…

The revised draft (S5):

> 1. You can go anywhere
>
> 2. In short, I will go to anywhere, I will…

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S5):

> 1. (She skipped the word the teacher deleted, "to")
>
> 2. "In short, I will go to I will talk about…" What's going on here?

It is clear that the student had difficulty understanding the indirect correction, but in

the rewriting stage she tried to solve the problem by adding "anywhere" after "go to".

It shows that she considered the indirect correction later on. However, she apparently

did not notice that in a previous comment the teacher asked her to delete "to" before

"anywhere". As she had already skipped the direct correction in the TAP, she might

not have been aware of the direct correction. The teacher might be right when she said

that the students did not care much about her direct corrections.

In another example, which made the teacher think like that, the student used

the teacher's direct correction but did not consider the other changes she had made

according to the indirect correction in the same sentence. In consequence, she

corrected one thing, but because she did not change the rest of the sentence, there was

again another error.

The first draft with the teacher's corrections (S4):

> They don't allow∧ to live in another house until their child <u>getting</u> married,
> <div align="center">WT</div>
> especially if <u>you</u> <u>are</u> a girl.
> <div align="center">(she) (is)</div>

The revised draft (S4):

> Children aren't allowed to live in another house until they get married,
> especially if she is a girl.

The related transcription from the teacher's TAP (S4):

> I used the missing word mark since I assumed that the student would add
> "their child" there. On the other hand, the student preferred using passive
> voice, so she changed the pronoun with the plural form. Yet, she should have
> been able to think about the direct correction one more time and see the error.

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S4):

> (She skipped the missing word mark and the symbol.) The teacher corrected
> my mistakes. That's great. There is nothing much to do.

The teacher's reaction about the students' uncritical acceptance of direct

corrections is reflected in the students' TAPs, where we have seen that they skipped

the direct corrections. They immediately accepted them and stated this, or they did not

mention anything about them, which were interpreted as their acceptance. There was

no critical thinking or questioning when the students dealt with the direct corrections.

There was only one case in which the student disagreed with the teacher, but

we see that he made the changes in the revised draft as the teacher wanted.

The related example:

The first draft with the teacher's direct correction (S2):

There are lots of people who has no money all over the world.

The second draft (S2):

There are lots of people all over the world who have no money.

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S2):

> The teacher has changed the location of "all over the world", but I have seen it
> somewhere in the internet. It was again at the end of the sentence, so I think
> it's OK here, at the end.

In the students' TAPs, there were times when the students apparently forgot to

check the indirect corrections while reading the teacher's direct markings (see The

Analysis of the Students' TAPs). In the teacher's TAP, it was observed that the

student had still the same problem. In the following example, the student changed the

phrase as the teacher marked but did not correct the errors with the preposition and

the word. She deleted the wrong word and left the same preposition.

The student's text with direct and indirect corrections (S6):

Whole improvements must be in big control for obstructing happening
                               WP WW   (to prevent a bad situation)

a bad situation.

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The second draft (S6):

Whole improvements must be in control to prevent a bad situation.

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S6):

(reads the whole sentence but ignores the two symbols. Interested in the teacher's direct correction.) "to prevent a bad situation". Ohh… yes the teacher presented another alternative I guess.

The related transcription from the teacher's TAP:

The student did not correct her errors because she may have thought only one correction would be enough for a sentence.

When we turn back to the findings of the students' TAPs about the students' use of the direct corrections and compare them with the results of the teacher's TAP, we find that one of the students who had an alternative answer to the teacher's direct correction preferred not to use her own answer.

The first draft with direct and indirect corrections (S5):

(when)
Most ~~of~~ people think that ∧ they help you…

The second draft (S5):

Most people think that when they help you…

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S5):

Umm… yes, yes "when! they help you and you would overcome your problems easier" Or I can use "if" instead of "when", it would be better. Yes, right. (The teacher has added the word "when").

The teacher had some concerns about whether she was clear with her comments and whether giving explanations to the students was useful. However, she was not aware of one of the student's negative reaction to whom she stated the reasons for the change she made with the place of the pronoun in a phrasal verb. In the TAP, the student verbalized her uneasiness with this long explanation. However,

the teacher regretted not doing the same thing for another student who had the same

mistake in the first draft.

The first draft (S1):

> …why don't you give up it now?

The teacher's direct correction:

> …why don't you give up it now?

If a phrasal verb is a separable one, when you are using it with a pronoun like 'he, she, and it', you should put the pronoun into the middle.

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S1):

> "give it up" OK. great, a silly mistake. (She reads the comment) "If a phrasal verb is a separable one when you are using it with a pronoun like 'he-she-it'..."OK, OK I do know it of course. The teacher needn't have explained this rule.

The first draft and the teacher's direct correction (S5):

> …you will work out it

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S5):

> "work out it" "work it out". (pause) OK. It should be "work it out".

The related transcription from the teacher's TAP (S5):

> I realized that I put the pronoun in the correct place in S5' paper, but I did not give the explanation for it as I did for S1.I should have done this because I want them to know why I make some changes. They need some explanations.

As the teacher is not aware of the S1's negative reaction to her detailed explanation,

she thought it worked well to explain the reasons.

> Despite the teacher having some concerns about how useful her direct

corrections were, she still said that she had to use direct corrections in some cases.

The related transcription from the teacher's TAP:

> When I think that the students cannot find the correct answers on their own, when there are lots of markings on the paper, and when I cannot figure out how to show a specific error because it is difficult to categorize it, I prefer correcting the errors myself.

Indirect Corrections

The other type of comments on sentence-level errors were indirect corrections the teacher made mostly by the help of symbols. In the students' TAPs, we have seen that the students skipped some of them.

Table 5 below illustrates to what extent the students considered the indirect corrections and made correct changes according to the comparison of the first and the revised drafts. The first column gives the number of indirect corrections the students were provided with. In the second and the third columns, it gives the number and the percentages of the indirect corrections used by the students considering the parts that were not changed at all even though the teacher marked some errors with them. Finally, in the last two columns, the numbers and the percentages of the correct revisions made according to the teacher's indirect corrections are shown.

Table 5.

<u>The Students' Use of the Teacher's Indirect Corrections on the Sentence-Level Errors in the Revised Drafts</u>

Student Participants	*IC	IC used	IC- used (%)	IC- correct changes	IC- correct changes (%)
S1	15	15	100%	12	80%
S2	14	12	86%	8	57%
S3	16	13	81%	10	63%
S4	22	22	100%	21	95%
S5	33	29	88%	23	67%
S6	48	36	75%	24	50%

Note.
IC: The number of the teacher's indirect corrections in each student's first draft.
IC-used: The indirect corrections the students responded to and made changes accordingly.
IC-used-(%): The percentages of the indirect corrections the students made changes accordingly.
IC-Correct Changes: The number of the correct changes the students made by using the indirect corrections.
IC-Correct Changes-(%): The percentages of the correct changes the students made by using the indirect corrections
* The indirect corrections in the sentences that the teacher suggested the student delete were not included.

The table shows that the students who received the highest number of indirect corrections, S6 and S5 are the ones who skipped the corrections and made incorrect changes most. The results are supporting the findings in the analysis of the students' TAPs section, which says that as the number of the teacher's indirect corrections increased, the students considered them less while revising their papers. A general overview of the table also illustrates that it is true for the indirect markings skipped. While S6 changed the 75% of the errors marked indirectly, the others made more changes than S6 did.

The students had skipped some indirect corrections during the TAPs, but it cannot be said that they again skipped the same comments. Some of them noticed the markings they had not before, but some of them did not notice them for the second time. It is also possible that they noticed but did not correct them.

The teacher's TAP summarizes that the students were good at identifying and correcting spelling and punctuation errors; however, they generally failed to correct wrong words and prepositions and to add the missing words. The teacher said that though all the students tried to correct these types of errors she marked indirectly, they again wrote something wrong most of the time. There are some other problems with these types of markings, too.

Example:

The first draft with the teacher's direct and indirect corrections (S2):

<div style="text-align:center">(?)</div>

We can see ∧ main effect of (low) on a person's life if we watch TV or read newspapers. Main effect of this can be…

The second draft (S2):

> We can see that main effect of being poor on a person's life if we watch TV or read newspaper. Main effect of this can be…

The teacher's TAP (S2):

> Actually, he was supposed to add 'the' instead of 'that'. It does not sound good, either.

What is striking here is that the teacher did not use the missing word mark for the same error at the beginning of the following sentence. Consequently, the student may have thought that he should have used 'that' because it was a noun clause. It

seems that the student remembered some phrases like 'I can see that…, it shows that".
The problem seems to be with consistency.

There appeared another problem with the missing word marks. The teacher stated that she could not be sure whether to use it for each missing word even if they are in the same place. In that case, the students may count them and try to add the same number of words. On the other hand, they may change the whole sentence, so there may not be any words needed or adding only one word would be enough. The teacher's comparison of the first and the revised drafts revealed that the missing word marks confused the students.

The first draft with the teacher's indirect corrections (S1):

There is another alternative ∧ ∧ just the money that we can buy only a pocket

of cigarettes we can buy a book….

The second draft (S1):

There is another alternative for us just the money that we can buy only a pocket of cigarettes we can buy a book….

The teacher's TAP (S1):

She must have counted the missing word marks here and tried to put two words, but she should have used 'with' here. 'For us' was not what I expected to get here. Should I put only one missing word mark even if more than one word is missing? I'm not sure.

As the student did not mention anything about this part, we do not know what the student thought while revising her draft.

S4 experienced a problem with sorting out where the missing word mark belonged to.

The first draft with the teacher's indirect correction (S4):

…you're big enough ∧Only way to have your own space…

The second draft (S4):

…you're big enough to control your life. Only way to have your own space…

The teacher's TAP (S4):

"OK. She corrected well. Just a second. 'you're big enough to control your life. Only way to'. Oh now I see, I put the missing word mark to show the article missing. She should use 'the' before 'only way'. However, it is also better to use 'to infinitive' form here after 'enough'. It's funny. She made a change, a correct one, but the error I indicated is still the same."

The reason for this problem was that the student thought it showed a missing word after 'enough'. On the other hand, it referred to the missing article at the beginning of the following sentence.

Sometimes the students just deleted the words instead of finding a suitable word, or they changed something in the sentence other than the words the teacher asked to be changed.

Example:

The first draft with the teacher's indirect correction (S2):

This makes the person unhappy <u>for</u> life.
                                        WP

The second draft (S2):

This makes the person unhappy for his/her future life.

The student's TAP (S2):

'unhappy for life'. She says wrong preposition. What else can I use with unhappy here? I thought 'for' would be suitable.

The teacher's TAP (S2):

> Here he noticed my mark, but maybe because he couldn't find the correct preposition, he added a possessive pronoun. Umm…Actually, it sounds not bad. OK. I'll accept it correct.

At the end of her TAP, the teacher stated her dissatisfaction with the revised versions. According to her, the students made the changes when she gave the answers, and they made some changes according to her indirect corrections, but they did not read their papers over and over again to see them as a whole. She said they tried to correct errors because she told them to do so, but not because they wanted to improve their writing. The teacher mentioned that the students should have noticed the errors which she forgot to mark by reading the texts over and over again.

The teacher's TAP (S3):

> "…a women…" Oh my god! Do I have to mark everything? Don't I have a chance to forget to mark some errors? How come can't she notice this?

<u>Content-Level Revisions</u>

The teacher's comments on content were mostly positive. The students were not asked to make as many changes as they were asked to do with the sentence-level errors. In the same examples in which the students were told to make some changes in the content, it was observed that these comments were taken into consideration by the students, whereas in some cases they were not. In the following example, the student considered the comment.

The first draft and the teacher's comment (S4):

> Even if their parents think positivly, the other people's thoughts affact their lifes, too.

> | Tell how! Explain this more, it's a good point! |
> | --- |

(Note. The teacher's corrections on sentence-level errors were not included here.)

The revised version (S4):

> Even if their parents think positively, the other people's thoughts affect their lives, too. Parents think that a person who is older than them always knows the truths. They really care about other people2s opinions. Therefore, while you are trying to persuade your parents, they are affected and changed their ideas. The point that they miss is time and conditions are changing.

The teacher's TAP (S4):

> (She reads the revised version.)
> OK. She considered my suggestion here, and explained her view in more detail.

After the teacher finished checking all the revised versions, she mentioned that she thought her positive comments on content and discourse caused the content-level feedback to be neglected by the students.

The teacher's TAP:

> Sometimes I feel that they are so fascinated by my positive comments on content that they do not feel the need to try more to improve their texts. I should be mean while praising.

Discourse-Level Revisions

The most neglected part of the teacher's comments was the ones on discourse, as stated by the teacher. The teacher generally used the end notes to give detailed explanations for the discourse problems. However, the teacher was dissatisfied when she noticed that the students did not make the changes she suggested.

The teacher's TAP:

> Now I've finished checking the revised drafts, and I see that my end notes, which, I think, the most important parts to think about, are the parts which the students did not care about at all. I'm so sorry to see that.

When the students were asked to delete some sentences, to remove the unrelated parts, or to cut the essay short, they were successful. In contrast, they failed to improve their organization by making changes in the supporting or topic sentences.

The teacher assumed that the students did not even read her comments. The reason is not always what the teacher thought. Actually, some students considered the end notes for discourse but misunderstood them, and that's why the changes were not satisfying for the teacher.

Example:

The teacher's end note (S3):

> Your essay is excellent! I really want to thank for it. Your ideas and the way you put them into sentences are really impressive! All you have to do is to find more general topic sentences for your body paragraphs. The existing ones are specific and you can still use them as supporting examples after you write the more general topic sentences!

The related transcription from the student's TAP (S3):

> … goes on reading the end comment. "………general topic sentences….." OK OK I see. I think in the first body paragraph there should be more general ideas. I think the content is a little bit weak. OK I'll work on it.
> goes on reading the end comment. " The existing ones are specific and you can……as supporting examples" OK she says my supporting sentences are good. (Wrong interpretation) "…after you write the more general topic sentences. Thank you" OK I thank you.
> To sum up, I'll change the first body paragraph, it should be more general. My supporting sentences are good. OK.

Example:

The teacher's end note (S2):

> Intro: Also, if you combine the last two sentences of that paragraph, your thesis statement will sound better.

The related student's TAP (S2):

> Then, umm…the teacher told me to compare the last two sentences in the introduction to have a better thesis statement. I know that I really made a mistake in those sentences, but I was too lazy to correct. (laughs)

The teacher criticized herself for the students' ignorance of the end notes. She said in her TAP:

> I should have used shorter and more direct sentences. Moreover, I should be careful about the number of my positive comments. S3, for example, is a very good student, but even she ignored my end comments. I think she was fascinated by being praised too much. Maybe it's because there are not many corrections in her paper. Sometimes it seems to me that as I mark their papers more they care about my comments more."

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the data gathered from the teacher's comments in the students' first drafts, the student's TAPs, interviews with the students, and the teacher's TAP, in which she compared the first and the revised versions, and I directed the commentary to answer the research questions concerning the students' use of written teacher commentary. The questions were taken into consideration from multiple perspectives, and the results reached from these perspectives were analyzed in comparison with each other.

The following chapter will present the discussion of these findings, the limitations of the study, the pedagogical implications derived from the results, and the suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

Introduction

The main focus of this study is students' use of written teacher commentary. In this study the problem with how much the students could process the messages conveyed by the teacher's written commentary on sentence, content, and discourse was investigated. Another issue considered in the study was students' strategies for handling the comments which they had problems understanding and interpreting. The final focus was the correlation between the revised drafts and the teacher's actual intention with the comments.

The participants were 6 volunteer A-level (upper intermediate) students and their writing teacher at ITU School of Foreign Languages. There were both and good writers in the study according to the teacher's experiences with the students.

The students were assigned to write an essay, and the teacher responded to the texts. When the students received their first drafts with the teacher's comments, they were asked to verbalize their thoughts about these comments. On the following day they were provided with their first drafts and interviewed to clarify the confusing points in the recordings of their TAPs and to find out their general attitude toward the teacher's written feedback. After that, they were asked to rewrite their papers in a few days and hand them in to the teacher. The teacher compared the revised and first drafts of each student. She explained her purpose with her comments and how much the students had been able to follow them. While the students' TAPs were fully

transcribed, the recordings of the interviews and the teacher's TAP were transcribed

selectively. After the teacher's comments were categorized according to the levels

they referred to such as sentence, content, and discourse, the students' reactions to

these comments were analyzed. The number of sentence level indirect corrections the

students considered was calculated. With the interviews the students' strategies to

handle the parts they did not understand in the teacher feedback were discovered.

Finally, through the teacher's and the students' TAPs the first and the second drafts

were compared. This chapter includes a discussion of the research findings

concerning the research questions and the relevant literature, the limitations of the

study, the pedagogical implications derived from the results, and the suggestions for

further research.

<div align="center">General Results and Discussions</div>

The analysis of the data collected through the think aloud protocols,

retrospective interviews, and the first and the revised drafts helped answer the

research questions investigated in the study. In this section, the findings of the study

and the relevant literature will be presented for each research question.

<div align="center">The Students' Use of the Teacher's Written Comments</div>

The results of the study showed that the students' reactions varied according to

the levels the comments referred to, i.e., sentence, content, and discourse. The most

important comments for them were the sentence level ones, as they stated in the

interviews, and they spent more time correcting them than they did the content and

discourse-level issues. This finding contradicts the results of both Leki (1991) and

Ferris (1995), who indicate that all the students checked the marks the teacher made

in their papers. Moreover, the percentage of the students who paid attention to

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comments about content is almost the same with the percentage of the others who paid attention to comments on grammar in Ferris (1995).

What students consider more may be related to what they get more written comments on, that is, on grammar, content, or discourse. In this study, the number of comments on sentence-level errors depended on the number of a student's sentence-level errors, but generally it seems that the sentence-level errors had the priority because of their number. This parallels the findings in Sommers (1982), who says the teacher make students focus on some specific sentence-level errors by giving more feedback on grammar, and in doing so she may allow the students to see their texts as finished products. Consequently, it was observed that giving more feedback on sentence-level issues attracted the students' attention toward an error-free essay in terms of grammar and vocabulary, but not of content and organization.

For the sentence-level errors, the teacher used in-text notes whether they were direct or indirect corrections. She did not use the end note to comment on the students' sentence-level errors in general. As a result, as observed during the TAPs, when the students were first given their drafts back with the teacher's comments, they were either encouraged by the fewer number of colorful markings or discouraged by the great number of colorful markings.

The analysis of the students' TAPs revealed that the number of markings negatively affected their utilization of the comments. They skipped some indirect corrections in the TAPs. It can be concluded that giving feedback to each error in a paper does not mean that students consider them all. On the contrary, it may cause the students not to notice the global errors like wrong tense usage but focus on some local errors like punctuation, which they can correct by themselves later on. The teacher, on

the other hand, pointed out in her TAP that it seemed to her that the students

considered her comments more as the number of the comments increased. The study

has proved that it is just the opposite since students paid less attention to the teacher's

comments as the number of these comments increased.

There is not a direct correlation between the number of direct and indirect

corrections. The results showed that the teacher used direct corrections when she

thought that the error was difficult to identify with a symbol and when she thought

that the students could not sort out the problem on their own. The teacher did not

decide on the number of direct and indirect corrections she would give beforehand or

by considering the students' success as writers.

It was observed that the students had some problems with the symbols used for

indirect corrections by the teacher. They sometimes could not understand what a

symbol stood for. The students themselves also admitted in the interviews that they

usually forgot the symbols and got confused by them though the teacher had informed

them about the meanings of the symbols. This finding is similar to that found in Altan

(1998), in which she referred to the students' problems interpreting the symbols.

Another finding of the study was that students often skipped some indirect

corrections while they saw a margin note, which was generally on discourse and

content, and started reading it. Although they skipped fewer corrections at the

rewriting stage of their papers as the teacher's comparison of the revised and the first

drafts showed, during the TAPs they were observed to get confused about what to

look at when they were presented with different types of comments like margin notes

on content, which were in phrases or sentences, and in-text indirect corrections, which

were in symbols, at the same time. What they usually did was just read the margin

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note without thinking about the message and go on with the sentence level errors but not with the ones they had been dealing with before they saw the margin note. This is similar to what Zamel (1985) concludes from previous studies. She stated that when students are supposed both to correct local surface-level errors and to elaborate on an idea in the text at the same time, they are often confused because they can not decide what to focus on.

When it comes to the students' usage of the teacher's direct corrections on sentence level errors, the percentages change. It can be said that the students used the teacher's direct corrections almost 100%. Despite the fact that the students skipped some direct corrections in the TAPs, in the interviews it was found that it was not because they did not consider them, but because they always accepted them and would make the necessary changes accordingly. In the teacher's TAP the same results were confirmed because all of the six students had used the teacher's direct corrections in their revised drafts.

In the students' and the teacher's TAP, it was observed that the direct corrections could sometimes cause the indirect corrections to be ignored. While they were reading the direct corrections, they ignored the indirect ones in the same sentence. It was observed that the students thought it was enough to correct only one or two errors in a sentence, and when there was a direct correction it was enough to use it.

Whether it is an indirect correction or a direct one, the teacher's markings attract students' attention to some specific parts, and so they cannot see some other problems in their texts. They think that the teacher is responsible for marking each and every error in their papers, and therefore, they do not have to check the whole

essay again for grammar and vocabulary. As a result, even if they correct some parts, they may still have some similar problems because they do not consider the other necessary changes to make that those corrections require in the rest of the sentence or paragraph. It is the same for the errors that the teacher forgets to mark as we have deduced from the teacher's own words in her TAP.

The teacher's comments on content were mostly neglected by the students because they gave the priority to the sentence-level errors. Especially when the comment on content was written in the margins, they were distracted by the sentence-level errors, and tried to correct them instead of thinking about the problem with the content. At this point what Zamel (1985) suggests can be elaborated on. She states that teachers should not mix content-related comments with grammatical corrections in the same draft. As indicated in this study, it is difficult for students to consider the comments on content, discourse, and sentence at the same time.

In the interviews, the students said that the teacher's comments on content-level problems were the least important ones for them because it was not possible to change someone's ideas, and it was difficult to correct those kinds of errors since they required them to change not just one word as they did when correcting sentence level errors but to correct the whole essay sometimes. The students may be right because they do not spend much time in the pre-writing stage and start writing the essay immediately. On the other hand, the first stage of writing should be emphasized more to solve this problem. Then, students can give more importance to brainstorming and free writing to generate their ideas, and so can be more consistent with their ideas to support. Just like the FL students in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) study, the EFL students in my study stated that they would like to receive the teacher's comments on

sentence-level issues, and then on content and organization. However, this result contradicts the findings of Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), where the students asked for more comments on content than on grammar. This difference in the students' preferences for feedback on content or grammar may be related to the difference between the EFL and ESL settings. My study does not show a similarity with Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) perhaps because my study was conducted in an EFL setting, in which students consider writing as a kind of grammar exercise.

When the students' drafts are analyzed in terms of the teacher's commentary, it is interesting to see that the teacher did not comment much on content level issues, either. Therefore, it can be asserted that the students in this study were provided with fewer comments on content but more comments on sentence-level errors, unlike the students in Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), who were given feedback mostly on content. My study showed that neither the teacher nor the students were really engaged with content level issues.

The teacher's comments on the content of the students' texts were mostly positive ones presented in the end notes and in full sentences or phrases. However, the teacher said that the positive comments she made on content may have so encouraged the students that they left some other types of errors uncorrected. In contrast to the teacher's opinion, in the interviews, the students insisted that they should be given positive comments, too because they were encouraging.

To sum up, it can be said that the content level problems are neither the teacher's nor the students' primary concern. The students do not receive much feedback on content, and when they do, the comments are usually positive. Apart

from sentence and content-level issues, students also get written commentary on discourse-level issues.

The teacher's and the students' TAPs showed that after the comments on sentence-level errors, the second most important type of comment was on discourse, that is, the organization, cohesion, and coherence. Both marginal and final notes were used to indicate a discourse problem, and it was usually followed by a suggestion. During the TAPs, the students considered these notes carefully and tried to interpret them. They were successful at doing that when the teacher showed the unrelated sentences to delete, but it was seen in the teacher's TAP that they could not handle the other discourse issues well, such as using more connectors between sentences. The teacher's disappointment was worth mentioning as a finding of the study. The reason for the students' failure in utilizing these comments was that they could not interpret the sentences explaining a problem well, and that they could not figure out which part of the essay those comments referred to. This result contradicts what Ferris et al. (1997) suggest. They approve end commentary more than the marginal commentary because it is more comprehensive and clearer as a result of the large space to write. Yet, this is not the case in this study since the students had problems interpreting the comments.

In short, it can be concluded that although the students take the comments on discourse seriously, they cannot utilize them effectively because of having difficulty identifying the exact location of the comments and interpreting long end notes.

It can be concluded that students have problems understanding and interpreting the teacher's comments when she uses the symbols for indirect corrections, when she cannot refer to the part of the essay she comments on, when she

uses mitigated comments, when she provides students with comments on all the aspects of a text at the same time, and when she uses various written feedback types in the same text such as margin notes and in-text notes. In addition, the study shows that students prefer to focus on sentence-level feedback more than on content and discourse.

The Students' Strategies to Solve the Problems with the Teacher's Written Comments

The students' strategies to figure out their problems with the teacher's written feedback again varies with the levels the comments refer to such sentence, content, and discourse.

When the sentence-level errors were considered, they first preferred to think about them more carefully one more time and if necessary consult a dictionary. Another strategy was either to directly ask the teacher or a peer student who was good at English. They avoided leaving the sentence-level errors uncorrected, but if they could not get the correct answer, they preferred leaving them as they were. According to the teacher's TAP, sometimes there were uncorrected errors which had been marked by the teacher with symbols. In some cases these were the parts with symbols which the students did not understand during the TAPs.

For the content-level feedback, the students mentioned two strategies. They reported that when they had a problem with the content-level commentary, they either left them as they were or talked to the teacher. What is interesting here is that they stated their reason for talking with the teacher as convincing her about their ideas. They thought that the teacher criticized the content since she could not understand what they were trying to tell her. Consulting a peer student was not mentioned as a strategy in solving content-level problems.

The students' strategies to find a way to solve the problems with the comments on discourse were not many. They thought that those were the things special to their texts and there was no need to ask a peer student. Likewise, there was no need to consult the teacher because she had already given some suggestions in the final notes.

For all the corrections, consulting a grammar book or their previous essays were not considered much, a finding which is which is similar to the one in Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990).

The Correlation between the Revisions in the Students' Second Drafts and
the Teacher's Actual Intention in Her Comments

The findings of the study showed that although the teacher had tried to respond to the students' texts in terms of various aspects such as discourse and content, the students could not use all of the comments even if they intended to do so at first.

The students' responses to the teacher's comments on sentence level errors were not disappointing for the teacher as much as inadequate, as she mentioned in her TAP. The sentence level problems were not handled well by the students because they ignored some very simple errors that the teacher did not mark in their first drafts and because they did not make any necessary changes following the corrections she referred to. As a result, although some parts were corrected, there were still some errors left uncorrected. It indicates that students make some changes in their text because the teacher asks them to do so, but they do not know why they make those changes. This is what Hyland (2003) pointed out in his research. He states that as a

result of students' tendency to change only the errors marked by the teacher, their writing does not improve in the long term.

Although the students had accepted the teacher's direct corrections, it was observed that these corrections could not improve their texts regarding grammar and vocabulary. What Bates et al. (1993) and Ferris et al. (1997) suggest is to indicate the location and perhaps the type of error instead of directly correcting it to stimulate a student response. Truscott (1999) also claims that direct error correction is not effective in the improvement of students' writing.

The teacher's comments on discourse and content-level issues had the secondary importance for the students, and the teacher realized this while comparing the first and the second drafts. She stated that the students did not consider her comments in the final notes, which were about discourse and content. Apart from not finding the drafts well-improved, she also found the students' attitude toward her comments disappointing since she paid much more attention to these parts than she did to the comments on sentence-level errors. However, she was not aware of the fact that the students took these end notes seriously, but they had some problems receiving the messages in them.

The teacher thought that the positive comments with which she started her end notes caused the students to ignore the comments on discourse. The problem was that the students could not receive the messages the teacher tried to convey because she used praise before criticism and, as Hyland (2003) asserts, students are not good at understanding mitigated comments. On the other hand, from the students' point of view, praise built their confidence and encouraged them to work on their weaknesses in writing more. The results are similar with what Cardelle and Corno (1981) found.

They also asserted that the students preferred the combined form, that is getting praise, criticism, and suggestion together. The students in the study mentioned that they should have at least one positive comment in their texts, and the same statement was given by the students in Ferris' (1995).

<p style="text-align:center">Limitations of the Study</p>

Because this study took an in-depth look at the revising processes of students, the numbers were limited. The data were gathered from only six students because the data collection methods required dealing with each participant one by one, and this did not allow the research to be carried out with more participants. Second, only one teacher participated in the study, so it was not possible to see the students' reactions to different styles of written teacher commentary.

In addition, there are two time-related limitations. First, the study was conducted with only one writing assignment and one revision. The same writing-revising cycle was not repeated because of time limitations. Second, the students were not trained on the think-aloud method well since there was not enough time. The data were collected immediately after they were introduced to the method, and they did not have a chance to practice before using it.

Finally, the study was conducted with students from one level. Students from different levels of proficiency were not included in the study. It is not clear whether the results are applicable to the other levels.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of the data have provided some useful insights for teachers not only on the local but also on the international FL teaching settings because it has presented some serious issues in terms of giving written feedback such as where to put comments, what to say, and how to say it.

A multi-draft setting, in which there are more than one getting feedback and revising steps, may help solve many problems with written teacher feedback. Students desire to have error-free essays, so they pay much more attention to comments on sentence-level errors. In order to make students more aware of the importance of the content and discourse of their essays, the comments on sentence-level errors can be postponed till the end of the process in a multi-draft setting. In the first revision the teacher can give feedback for content, and in the second or third revision s/he can comment on sentence-level errors. In this way, students focus on only one aspect in each draft, and this may make them consider the comments on content, which was mentioned as the least important thing in an essay by the students in the study. They would not have to be in charge of correcting each type of error at the same time, so they would accept writing as a process, not just a product.

Improvement in writing is a never ending process. In this process getting feedback is the most important thing. Although written teacher commentary has an important place, it is most helpful when accompanied by self-editing, peer revision, and teacher- student conferencing. Because this is hard to do in one writing-getting feedback-revising cycle, in a multi-draft setting students would have time to do peer-revision and self-editing, which in turn would make students more responsible for their own learning. They can improve their critical thinking skills and be more active

in learning. With self-editing sheets which guide them, students would be more aware of their improvement in writing. Peer revision would help them see the parts they have not noticed before, and they also learn something from the others' errors. Even if there are just a few minutes available for each student, teacher-student conferencing would give students and the teacher a chance to talk about the parts they get confused with in the written comments. If they decide on the most important thing to talk about beforehand, it is not impossible to talk to each student in writing classes while others are working on their papers. It is better to include all the components in writing into the writing process. When the teacher's written feedback is the only feedback students get, students would go on responding to the teacher's feedback but not take the responsibility for their texts.

Another suggestion, which has been deduced from the results of this study, is selective marking. It has shown that marking each and every sentence-level error in a paper does not help students improve their texts even though teachers and students may assume otherwise. It not only causes students to get discouraged by the great number of markings but also to spend their time and energy on simple errors that they can notice later on instead of focusing on some serious ones which really spoil the meaning. Teachers may consider the global and local error distinction, each individual student's needs, or their background as language learners when they are responding to the students' texts. When teachers are selective in marking sentence-level errors and warn the students that teachers are not responsible for correcting everything in their papers, students may be more careful with improving their writing in terms of grammar and vocabulary. In this way, they will be informed that there may be some other errors the teacher does not comment on, and so they will take the responsibility

for their texts. When marking the sentence-level errors, the quality is more important than the quantity. In order to avoid the intensity of red ink on students' papers, teachers had better consider the global and local error distinction. If they prefer marking the local ones because the student is really weak on noticing and correcting them, then s/he can take margin notes or end notes about the general evaluation of the text in terms of those specific local errors. Some teachers prefer counting the local errors in each paragraph and write them down in the margins next to the paragraphs. As a result, although there is a standard way of marking sentence-level errors, teachers had better take each student individually because each student is unique with their weaknesses and strengths in writing, and each of them again is unique in their processing of written teacher response. As Ferris et al. (1997) assert "there is no "one-size-fits-all" form of teacher commentary!" (p.178)

Secondly, the study also revealed a problem with using more than one sentence-level correction in the same sentence because students could not pay attention to all of them. First of all, when there is more than one symbol referring to the errors in the same sentence, students may get confused. Sometimes the first change they make does not require the changes the teacher has pointed out in the rest of the sentence, but may require something totally different. However, students become so fixated on the corrections that they do not think about the sentence they have just made. Correcting turns into changing. Selective marking can be a way to solve this problem. The teacher should decide on the most serious type of errors that the student makes.

There are a few things to add about the use of direct and indirect corrections on sentence-level errors. When the direct and indirect corrections are used together in

the same sentence, there appears another problem, which is that the students become interested in the teacher's direct corrections and do not care about the indirect ones. The comparison of the students' first and the revised drafts in the study has shown that students accept the teacher's direct corrections, but they ignore the indirect markings. This causes confusion about the owner of the text, the teacher or the student. Teachers should be careful with the number of direct corrections, let the students tell something in their own words, and should be aware of the fact that the students avoid using indirect correction because they think they have already corrected something in their papers by using the direct corrections.

When the indirect corrections are considered, using symbols requires some other markings, too. As the results of the study has showed although the teacher informs the students about the meanings of symbols, students may forget them later on, and this causes them either to make wrong changes or ignore the symbols. They need something to remind them what the symbols stand for. One of the students in the study asked to be presented with the symbols and meanings in a small box at the end of their essays. Since it may take long time, the teacher can do it for the symbols they have problems understanding such as the missing word mark or "WT" (wrong tense). Another solution may be to mark and correct the first symbols which are difficult for the students to understand. Consequently, students can interpret the meaning when they see the correction and make the same thing with the same symbols in the rest of their texts.

On the other hand, understanding the meaning of the symbols is not the only problem with the symbols. What the students said about the teacher's indirect corrections is worth mentioning here. They say that they need to be shown "how to

correct" the errors but not "what to correct". For example, they know that "WW" stands for wrong word; however, they do not know how they can find a suitable one. From my own experience, I know that students use simple small English-to-Turkish and Turkish-to-English dictionaries, but they are not familiar with the ones providing various usages of words with examples or collocations. Perhaps what writing teachers should do is to train students on how to find the correct answers for each type of error with a symbol.

The comments on content and discourse are not in symbols and not as many as the sentence level corrections, but again there are a few things to keep in mind while commenting on content and discourse. These types of comments, either in the margins or in the final note, should be as clear and simple as possible. The students should be directed to the problematic part. In order to help them see the problems they can be asked some questions like "what is the relation between what you say here and your thesis statement?" instead of saying "unrelated idea, change it!". These questions can guide them well and convince them about the problematic parts as they have usually difficulty not only seeing but also accepting errors especially with the content.

Apart from the issues about how to respond to students' errors, another point to consider in written teacher commentary is where to put the comments, in the margins or in the final note section. Margins are usually used to comment on discourse and content, and using the margins is a good way to show the exact location of the part the teacher is talking about, but it has also a distracting effect. Students cannot easily shift from the sentence level corrections to the marginal notes and vice versa. This is what Zamel (1985) also suggests. She says that it is not useful for students to handle both content and sentence level issues in the same draft. Fathman

and Whalley (1990) look at the issue from another perspective. They say when the teacher gives general comments on content and shows the exact locations of sentence level errors, it is not disadvantageous to give content and grammar feedback together. However, in this study, it is proved to be disadvantageous to give feedback both on content and form in the same draft. The teacher should not write long sentences or phrases in the margins if s/he has to use them. Another alternative may be to number the marginal comments and explain them in detail at the end of the essay.

For the end notes, there are again a few things to say. First, it is better to keep them as short as and as simple as possible. Otherwise, students may misunderstand or misinterpret the messages the teacher gives. Second, there should be an order of the items mentioned. Some subtitles may help students see what each specific comment is on because they cannot jump from one issue to another. For example, one sentence can be about the organization and the following one about the ideas, but students may not be able to figure out each of them. They can only get the message for some of them. Furthermore, it is very important to be careful with the end notes while referring to some parts in the text. Students should easily be able to find which line or lines in the text the teacher is talking about.

Finally, it is important to use some praise in the end notes although it may have disadvantages. The students in the study emphasized their need to see something positive in their texts, too. They said it was encouraging, but the teacher had some concerns about the function of praise. She pointed out that the more she used praise the less effort the students put into practice. Then, it can be said that too much praise may be misleading, but there should be some. The other thing the students said to be important for them is the use of suggestions in the final note. Just like with the

sentence-level errors, they stated that they needed to be shown how to correct apart from what to correct. Praise, criticism, and suggestion should be used together in limited amounts.

The most important thing to take into consideration with all these suggestions is that students need training on how to use the feedback they get and how to improve their writing. They should be informed about what academic writing is and what they should do as student writers. They need teachers' guidance, but they do not need teachers' authority to make others hear their voice with their written words.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the limitations of the current study, a further study can be conducted with more than six students in order to get a more general view of the students' use of written teacher comments. Similarly, the procedure can be repeated with one more essay with written teacher feedback and revising steps to see what may change if the process of revising has more steps. It may help to see whether the students' attitudes toward written teacher commentary change or not.

Conducting the same study with more than one teacher would be interesting to see whether different feedback styles bring about changes in the students' understanding and utilizing the comments.

Another further research could be using the suggestions made in the pedagogical implications in this revising getting feedback cycle, that is making comments on different aspects in each draft.

Moreover, the study was conducted with A level students at ITU School of Foreign Languages, and it may be interesting to do the same study with students from

different levels. It may bring about different results when the language proficiency is considered.

Finally, when the data collection instrument, TAP is considered, the importance of the training should not be underestimated. It may be beneficial to prepare some exercises to make participants familiar with the method. It can be also suggested the participants be given more than one training session individually.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to find out how much importance students give to written teacher feedback and how much they use it. The findings of the study have demonstrated the importance of written teacher commentary for students, but they have also shown that there are some important aspects for teachers to consider while giving written feedback. The study has highlighted some results in respect to the questions of what to comment on, how to comment, and where to put these comments.

We have joined the students' journey through the teacher's written feedback and observed the difficulties they have experienced. What we have learned from the study is expected to help teachers make this journey more enjoyable, informative, and comfortable both for themselves and for their students.

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Appendix A.

Sample Transcription from a student's (S6) TAP

Directions

The teacher's comments were numbered according to their order.

"…"   used to refer to the parts in the text.

(…)   used for nonverbalized data

1. The teacher says she couldn't find the word, but I took it from a source in English. Therefore, I cannot correct it.

2. "Rewrite this sentence..." (Reads the comment). (Long Pause) The teacher says this sentence is not comprehensible enough. I'll correct it when the second draft is due.

3. Wrong word, "which". Is "that" more suitable than "which"?

4. Spelling mistake. "i" is missing.

5. (She skipped the missing word mark next to the spelling mistake)

6. The teacher wrote "a-r-g." But I don't know what it stands for. "cause three main damage"

7. "damage" wrong word. Actually, I was not sure when I wrote "damage", but that was the only word came to my mind which means "zarar" (harm) in Turkish.

8. "bring end" I saw some marks (referring to the missing word mark) all through the paper, but I don't understand what they mean. Maybe they indicate that there is something missing.

9. Again, I wrote the same word wrong. "unconscious"

10. (ignored the missing word mark)

11. Here again the teacher asks me to rewrite the sentence.

12. (ignored the missing word mark)

13. Um… I used "in the air" in the wrong place. (The teacher showed the right place)

14. "grown" "population grown". I knew that they could be used together in this way. I don't know.

15. "have been added", "in this", "has been incredible", "climate is affecting" puff WT; WP, WT, WF I don't understand any of them at all.

16. Spelling. The same type of mistake again. Spelling. This is my biggest problem; I always have the same problem in my essays.

17. (ignored the missing word mark)

18. (ignored the teacher's direct spelling correction. "some")

19. "In addition transition". Are these words written together? Is this what I'm expected to do here? "In addition" I don't know.

20. "a-r-g." Again. Arrangement comes to my mind, but what's the connection then? "season have become" "season have become"

21. There's a question mark

22. "is also affecting". This time we have WF

23. "ocean" SP. Puff… I don't understand anything.

24. Again spelling. "Unconscious". I think these are all the results of my bad typing. I put an extra "o" by mistake.

25. (not mentioned anything about the word the teacher deleted "of")

26. (not mentioned anything about the spelling mistake "spreadind")

27. OK I wrote it in the wrong place. (The teacher's direct correction of the word order.)

28. Oh yes, I should have used "an" instead of "a". (the teacher's direct correction)

29. WF, pl, WT (She was confused with the symbols and skipped three comments)

30. Here there is a question mark, but is it because there is no full stop or is there a problem with "dangerous health of animals"? I cannot understand it.

31. Another "a-r-g" puff..

32. (The missing word mark was ignored)

33. What does "p-l" stand for? Puff... Oh yes, yes I should use the word in plural form. OK. I'll put an "s".

34. "natural" I wrote it wrong.

35. ("balance defect" was skipped)

36. Again I should write the word in plural form.

37. Ohh… "fragment" "such as cancer"

38. "cause also on plants a bad affect" "wrong order" Why? "cause also on plants a bad affect". I don't know.

39. Spelling, But it is not because I don't know the word, it's just a slip of my pen.

40. (ignored the missing word mark)

41. "WP" (Then starts reading the margin note)

42. "This is the 3rd body" (Pause) I don't understand what she means. Oh… it should be separated from the other.

43. "Spelling" I should write this word right.

44. (not mentioned two problems with agreement. She skipped those parts.)

45. (Also skipped one missing word mark and a punctuation mistake.)

46. "risks" it should be plural.

47. (reads the margin note.) "I don't think that this is your sentence" Yes, it is not mine. Very nice, she caught me☺ I'm ashamed of myself, really.

48. (She ignored 5 symbols in one sentence.)

49. "For example" I wrote example wrong. Ignored the "P" just after the "SP"

50. Again WF, WW. I don't understand.

51. I think I always did the same mistake. I should have used the plural forms of the words in many places.

52. (reads the whole sentence but ignores the 2 symbols. Interested in the teacher's direct correction.) "to prevent a bad situation". Ohh yes the teacher presented another alternative I guess.

53. "WF" again. Puff. I'm going crazy, what do all of these mean?

54. "becoming common clear energy" The teacher didn't understand the sentence.

55. (reads the following sentence.) "modified" I wrote it wrong.

56. "also been tested" Maybe it is because I used "must" and "been" together. Can't they be used this way? I don't know.

57. (ignored the missing word mark)

58. (reads the end comment.) Umm the teacher has found my essay too long. But I actually tried to write something long on purpose. She says because it is too long it is difficult to understand. OK. Umm…(reads the rest of the comment.) OK. I can delete some parts.