Teachers' Practices and Student Views of Written Feedback

A Case of TCFL Students

by

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ABSTRACT

Much of teacher feedback research is conducted in the L1 and L2 contexts. There is a paucity of research about feedback in the Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) context. Particularly, little is known about teachers' feedback practices and student views of teacher feedback. The present study was undertaken to fill the research gap by focusing on teachers' written feedback. Student data from surveying 38 students was interpreted with teacher data gained from interviewing three teachers. The findings indicate that teacher written feedback, which occurred in a multiple-draft writing cycle, generally accorded with recommended feedback principles. Students responded favorably to teacher written feedback. The results also reveal discrepancies between teachers' feedback practices and student perceptions of and preferences regarding teacher feedback. The results show that students wanted more written comments from teachers, though most teachers didn't prioritize written comments. Despite teachers' practices and their inclination toward offering coded indirect error correction, students in the study expressed their preferences for direct error correction. Most students are interested in receiving teacher feedback that addresses all aspects of writing rather than primarily focusing on language accuracy. The reasons that may account for the disjuncture are also discussed in the study. The study concludes that it is important for teachers to be aware of student attitudes and expectations regarding teacher feedback. Teachers should be flexible enough to provide individualized feedback. Pedagogical implications are included in the paper in the hope of shedding light on the development of effective and helpful

teacher feedback.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Response to student writing has been a source of interest and debate in the L1

and L2 writing field since the 1970's. Despite controversial issues such as

efficacy of error correction, focus on feedback, use of peer response, etc in the

discussion of response to student writing, it is unanimously agreed that teacher

response has a significant impact on student writing development. Most research

focuses on the most common type of teacher feedback, which is written feedback.

Furthermore, many feedback studies have included the student factor in the

research, focusing on learners' views of teacher response. Researchers have

stressed the importance of understanding how students perceive teacher feedback.

Without considering student perceptions of teacher feedback, teachers may run

the risk of maintaining feedback practices that are less effective or even counter-

productive. Thus, it is crucial that teachers give effective feedback and that

student views of teacher feedback also bounce back to teachers to help teachers

develop reflective feedback strategies (Lee, 2008a). Most feedback research is

conducted in the L1 or L2 contexts. There is little published research investigating

how school teachers and students deal with feedback in a TCFL context. The

present study serves to fill the gap by examining the practices of three TCFL

teachers regarding feedback, followed by a survey administered to students to find

out their perceptions of and preferences regarding teacher feedback. The research

results indicate discrepancies between teachers' feedback practices and student

perceptions of them. Solutions are suggested to help TCFL teachers address the

disjunctions. Teaching implications are also discussed in the paper to shed light

on written feedback in the TCFL field.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

RESEARCH ON L1 WRITING

A significant milestone in the development of L1 teaching composition was

the rise of the process approach to writing in classrooms around the United States

in the early 1970's (Garrison, 1974). Scholars strongly recommended that

teachers should allow students to complete multiple-draft papers rather than just

one final product. This new approach encouraged constant revision and provided

feedback to students in the course of their composition. According to the process-

oriented writing approach, teachers' intervention with feedback should take place

throughout the writing process, since feedback will have little effect if given

during the final stage. Teachers were advised to place more emphasis on global

issues like content, organization, and ideas during the preliminary stage of the

writing process and reserve feedback on local issues for the end of the writing

process. In addition, teachers were encouraged to be selective in error correction

and to choose only the most typical error types to address so that both teachers

and students would not be overwhelmed.

Shortly afterward, however, a number of L1 scholars made negative

comments about the effect of teacher responses, especially their written

commentary (Knoblauch & Brannon 1981; Sommer 1982; Sperling & Freedman,

1987). Based on the dismal results generated from their research, L1 writing

experts were dubious about the value of teacher written commentary. They argued

that teachers' concerns with correction take student attention away from the goal

of conveying their thoughts and composing a specific essay. Their criticism was that most teachers' comments were too general and vague to be constructive. When doubting and challenging the efficacy of teachers' written commentary and error correction, L1 composition scholarship called for the use of peer response and one-to-one teacher-student conferences to compensate for the drawbacks of teacher feedback.

RESEARCH ON L2 WRITING

Research on L2 writing clearly demonstrates its resemblance to and connection with research and teaching in L1 writing. Following the prominent trend of the process-approach in teaching L1 writing, researchers like Zamel strongly advocate borrowing results of L1 writing research and transferring them to L2 writing study. She argues that the process approach should be adopted in the ESL classroom as well (1985). She suggests that ESL writing teachers should have students write multiple drafts, give feedback on content only on early drafts, provide form-based feedback at the end of the process, and include teacher-student conferences and peer response in the writing process.

While some other researchers have claimed that because L2 writers are different from L1 native speakers, careful reconsideration has to be given when borrowing teaching practices from L1 writing. Horowitz (1986) points out that the process approach does not consider L2 students' linguistic gaps. Later studies like Fathman & Whalley (1990) and Ferris (1995 a) show that L2 students are able to cope with feedback on content and language at the same time. They further explain that postponing error feedback until the end of the writing process

actually has a negative impact on L2 students who have a more serious language deficiency compared with their L1 counterparts. In addition, their research shows that in general L2 students do not feel as if their work is being appropriated or as if their ownership is being taken away when receiving teacher written feedback.

STUDIES ON TEACHER FEEDBACK ON L2 STUENT WRITING

Recognizing the distinct features of L2 writing, Ferris (2003) synthesized extensive research on teacher response to L2 student writing and found four major issues covered in the existing research. They are, respectively, the focus on feedback, the form of the feedback, the effectiveness of the feedback on student writing, and student reactions to and preferences for teacher feedback.

The focus on teacher feedback. Early studies of response to L2 student writing showed that teachers mainly focused on students' language accuracy, including word choice, word form, word collocations, and mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and typing conventions, in writing, as opposed to addressing global issues such as ideas or organization (Cumming 1985; Zamel 1985). Zamel (1985) examined 15 ESL teacher responses to 105 student writing texts. She found that the ESL writing teachers "rarely [made] content-specific comments or [offered] specific strategies for revising the texts. The teachers overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers" (p. 86). In a similar study, Cumming (1985) analyzed how ten experienced ESL teachers responded to one ESL student paper, and she concluded that most teacher responses focused on surface errors. Cumming's and Zamel's studies set the tone for criticizing ESL teachers' excessive attention to students'

language errors. However, researcher Silva (1988) pointed out the overgeneralization of Zamel's conclusion and the limitations in her data collection.

A series of studies in the 90's reported a shift in teachers' focus from form to other issues (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, &Tinti, 1997; Conrad & Coldstein 1999). Cohen and Cavalcanti did a case study to investigate the feedback given by three ESL teachers. They noted that aside from comments on grammar, teacher feedback covered a range of other issues like content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. In a large scale study, Ferris et al., (1997) studied around 1,500 teacher comments on 110 essays composed by 47 university ESL students. After categorizing 1,500 comments, they found that teacher comments served a variety of purposes and covered a range of issues. Among these issues, comments on content and ideas comprised a larger percentage than the comments on grammar and mechanics issues. They conclude 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). Conrad and Goldstein's study (1999) identified a wide range of issues such as cohesion, content, lexical choice, and paragraphing addressed by a single teacher's response to L2 student writing. It is clear that many teachers have shifted their approach over the past 20 years, moving from focusing on form and product to providing feedback on a variety of issues such as content, structure, organization, language, style, etc over the writing process.

Following the suggestions made in L1 research, Zamel (1985) advocates setting priorities when giving feedback to writing drafts, and she encourages

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teachers to address certain concerns prior to others. However, Ferris (2003) warns teachers against misunderstanding Zamel's point and interpreting it as addressing only issues of ideas and content on preliminary drafts and attending to form at the final stage. Ferris disagrees about this practice of putting "content" and "form" at two ends of a continuum. She suggests that teacher feedback should be constructed according to the needs of individual student writers. In the example she provides, if a student writes a first draft with satisfactory ideas, development, and organization, then it is a waste of time for the teacher to struggle to offer content-based comments to the writer merely because it is the first draft. And on the other hand, a draft that is written with loose organization and a weak argument may still need the teacher's content-based response, even if it is at the final writing stage. Ferris (2003) states that L2 student writers, as opposed to L1 students, have a tremendous need for expert feedback on their written errors. She claims that "choosing to only give form-focused feedback on a few drafts throughout a writing course [arguably might] deprive students of critically needed input on an issue that could ultimately make or break them" (p. 24). Ferris' argument is backed by researcher Williams (2005) who also states that the order in which feedback is given does not really matter, and the best solution may be to give a mix of feedback. But it is important that a teacher should not comment on everything comprehensively and completely in a single draft: doing so will lead to student writers quickly becoming overwhelmed and bored.

The form of the feedback. In terms of those involved in the provision of feedback, feedback may consist of teacher feedback, teacher-student conferences,

and peer response. Technology development has expanded the scope of feedback to include electronic, audiotaped, and other modes of feedback, but this paper mainly addresses teacher written feedback. A substantial amount of teacher written feedback research is concerned with direct and indirect error correction. Direct feedback generally refers to the correct linguistic answer overtly provided by the teacher for the student and takes various forms, including crossing out an unnecessary word, inserting a missing word, and writing the correct target form on student's paper. When the student revises his/her draft, he/she only needs to copy the teacher's direct correction in the next draft. On the other hand, indirect feedback means the teacher only indicates the existence and the location of an error by means of an underline, circle, code, or other marking, but does not offer the correct form. With indirect feedback, the teacher points out a problem for the student but leaves it to the student to find, diagnose, and fix the problem him/herself.

Writing experts suggest that teachers use direct feedback when they feel the error is complex and beyond students' ability to solve it on their own, and that teachers employ indirect feedback when the error is manageable for students (Ferris 1999; Ferris, 2002). Between these two forms of feedback, indirect feedback is preferred by many researchers. They argue that indirect feedback provides students with sufficient hints to solve their problems and also develops students' independent writing skills (Lalande, 1982; Ferris 2002). With indirect feedback, students are more likely to become reflective learners, and being reflective promotes students' long-term language acquisition (James, 1998).

However, it has also been suggested that students at a low level of L2 proficiency may not have sufficient language knowledge to do self correction even after teachers have pointed out errors for them. Therefore, a combination of direct and indirect feedback may be the best way to help students (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998).

While most researchers suggest that indirect feedback is usually preferable, some argue over how explicit the feedback should be so that students will get enough direction to correct errors on their own. There are two types of indirect feedback: the first, coded indirect feedback marks an error in the text and gives a code or symbol, such as VT = wrong verb tense or Sp=spelling to represent a specific type of error. The use of code system in feedback provision generally serves a two-fold purpose. It categorizes writing errors and then gives students hints or direction to fix the problem on their own. In addition, it saves teachers time by pointing out errors that would otherwise be too time-consuming to write comments in the margin. For the second type, uncoded indirect feedback, teachers merely locate the error by underlining or circling an error without identifying its type. Roberts (1999) and Ferris & Roberts (2001) clearly argue in favor of coded indirect feedback and believe that it is more conducive to students' reflection and cognitive development. Moreover, students and teachers feel that uncoded indirect feedback may not provide students with enough guidance to do revision. However, students in the research reported that sometimes error codes and marks were confusing to them. In contrast, other research did not show a significant difference between using coded indirect feedback and uncoded indirect feedback. Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) examined the responses of 134 Japanese

college freshmen to one of four feedback types: direct feedback, coded in-text feedback, uncoded in-text feedback, and marginal feedback in their EFL composition classes. Every student composed five essays over the semester and their papers were assessed in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. The study reports no significant differences across four treatment groups on any of the three criteria. Similar results were found in another study, in which Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts, and McKee (2000) investigated the types of feedback provided by three teachers to 92 ESL students. The effects of the teacher feedback on both short-term (next draft revision) and long-term (students' overall written accuracy improvement over the semester) improvement were assessed. For short-term effects, this study found that 77% of the time students were able to correct errors with indirect coded feedback. And 75% of the time students were also able to correct errors with non-standard codes or even without codes at all. It is noteworthy that students succeeded in correcting errors 62% of the time when the codes given by teachers were identified by the researchers as inaccurate. Researchers speculated that students in the study might have just used the teacher feedback as a cue and then applied their linguistic knowledge to make corrections. Students may not have used or reflected on error type codes provided by teachers. Therefore, teachers are advised to first try out easier and faster uncoded feedback in the classrooms and then decide, based on student response, which form of feedback to continue. Based on the conflicting research results, Lee (2008a) suggests that teachers use a combination of error feedback strategies. In addition, she included three principles in her study. First, teachers should keep in mind that

compared with direct feedback, indirect error feedback is more beneficial to students' long term writing development. Second, if teachers choose to use coded feedback, she recommends that codes be used in a consistent manner and supported by detailed explanations in class. Third, selective error feedback is generally more productive than indicating all errors, since comprehensive error indication is exhausting for teachers and overwhelming for students.

The effectiveness of teacher feedback on student writing. Despite the perceived importance of the role of the teacher in providing response to student writing, early L1 and L2 research offered insufficient support to the argument that teacher feedback actually improves students' writing skills. Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) studied and compared various types of teacher response in L1 writing, including oral vs. written, explicit vs. implicit, etc., and came to the conclusion that none of the different response modes significantly affected student writing improvement. Similarly, in L2 writing research, Zamel (1982, 1985) claims that there is little evidence that teacher feedback helps students.

Contrary to the dismal picture depicted by the early researchers, later investigations (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Lam, 1991) examined multiple-draft and process-oriented writing classes and brought good news that teacher feedback produces positive short-term and long-term effects on students' development of writing skills. In Fathman and Whalley's (1990) study, 72 ESL students wrote a composition in class and then received one of the four kinds of feedback: no feedback, feedback on content only, feedback on grammar only, or feedback on both content and grammar. Teacher feedback was then returned to students and

students rewrote their compositions. It was found that while all four feedback groups showed significant improvement upon revision, the two groups who received content feedback improved more significantly than the two groups who didn't receive content feedback. A longitude case study conducted by Lam (1991) reported that throughout the writing course five student subjects in the research made successful revision changes in both content and grammar aspects by making use of teacher feedback.

In spite of conflicting findings and disagreement, a substantial number of studies advocate the effectiveness of error correction. The strongest opponent of error correction was Truscott, who claims that teachers' error feedback may be "incomplete, inconsistent, and inaccurate" (Truscott, 1996, p. 327). He further concludes that error correction for students is ineffective. Disagreeing with Truscott's belief, Ferris (2006) conducted a study based on a University ESL composition class. In the study students wrote three-draft essays on topics from assigned reading. The teacher provided written feedback to students' first drafts, focusing on ideas and organization. Then the teacher gave coded feedback on language problems, along with additional content feedback, to help students compose a second draft. In total, 146 essays were collected from 92 ESL students. Study results showed that in the short run students were able to make effective revisions based on teacher feedback from one draft to the next. The students successfully corrected 80% of their errors. In terms of the long term effect, which involved progress over the semester, the research finding was also encouraging. It

showed that students made apparent progress in reducing the numbers of errors between the first and last essay over the semester. The above research has refuted the claims of previous researchers that teachers give unhelpful error feedback and that students usually cannot effectively utilize the feedback in revision (Truscott, 1996; Zamel, 1985). Together with other studies (Lalande, 1982; Ferris 1995b; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), there is strong evidence that teachers' feedback, including error correction, improves students' language accuracy in both the short and long-terms.

Student perceptions of teacher responses. Another important area of research on teacher response to student writing explores what students think about teacher feedback (Cohen 1987, Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; McCurdy, 1992; Ferris, 1995a). Ferris (2003) explains the importance and value of investigating student views of teacher response. First, students' preferences for specific types of feedback often reflect instructional practices. For example, if knowledge of linguistic forms is stressed by the teacher in the class then students usually tend to prefer feedback that focuses on language form. Being aware of student perceptions of teacher feedback helps teachers evaluate their feedback efficacy. Teachers are also likely to gain a better understanding of students' needs and to develop themselves as reflective instructors. Second, improved feedback practice promotes students' motivation and confidence in their instructors. Listening carefully to what students think of and need from feedback brings about long-term beneficial effects to students and teachers as well. Third, in addition to helping teachers understand what students want and how they feel about teachers'

feedback practices, listening carefully to student response to feedback also provides an opportunity for teachers to learn what feedback philosophies and practices may be misused, misunderstood, and misinterpreted by students. With an awareness of misused practices, teachers can create a direct dialogue channel and explain their feedback philosophies and approaches to avoid miscommunication.

Two lines of inquiry are generally followed in this area. The first type is studies of students' response to feedback they have actually received from their teachers (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; McCurdy, 1992; Ferris, 1995a). In these studies, students were asked about their perceptions of what their teachers focused on in responding to their essays. The earliest study of this type was conducted by Cohen (1987). Cohen surveyed 217 ESL college students in the U.S., asking them what types of feedback teachers gave them, what aspects of writing teacher feedback addressed, and how they reacted to teacher feedback. The results of the survey were rather discouraging. Students reported that teachers' commentary mainly focused on grammar, and they claimed that they usually read and attended to teacher feedback. The student subjects also expressed difficulty in understanding and using teacher comments. Two following reduplicated studies showed more positive results. Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) examined nine ESL college students in Brazil. While this study yielded similar results to the original conducted by Cohen (1987) in that students reported that feedback they received mainly focused on grammar and mechanics, the students reported that they would like to receive feedback addressing all aspects of writing,

including content and organization. In 1992, McCurdy reduplicated Cohen's (1987) questionnaire to investigate 155 college ESL students at an U.S. university. The researcher noted that students expected and valued their teachers' feedback on writing. Unlike previous studies, results of this survey were very positive and encouraging. Student subjects in the survey claimed that their teachers' comments covered a range of writing issues. In order to gain a better understanding of student perceptions about teacher feedback in a multiple-draft writing setting, Ferris (1995a) examined 155 college ESL students, all of whom followed a three-draft writing practice in their ESL classes. This study gave an overwhelmingly affirmative response to the question of whether students felt teachers' feedback was helpful. 145 (93.5%) student subjects claimed that teacher feedback had helped their writing development. A vast majority of students welcomed and appreciated teachers' efforts. According to students, the order in which issues received teachers' attention was as follows: grammar, organization, content, mechanics, and vocabulary. The order remained the same for both preliminary and final drafts. The striking difference between Cohen's (1987) study and Ferris'(1995a) study is that Cohen's (1987) study showed that instructors focused mainly on grammar and students themselves preferred to receive feedback on grammar. In contrast, Ferris (1995a) pointed out that student subjects preferred to receive feedback on content.

Another line of inquiry examines student preferences regarding teacher feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996). Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) analyzed 110 ESL students and 137 FL students' survey responses to writing

feedback at an U.S. university. The major findings they reported as follows: across the ESL and FL groups, the most preferred feedback mode was written feedback plus teacher-student writing conferences; both FL and ESL students' responses indicated a strong concern for formal text features, such as lexical and grammatical accuracy. In another respect, however, the study discovered that the ESL students responded differently from the FL students. In particular, FL students paid more attention to form, whereas for ESL students, idea development appeared to be of greater importance. Explaining plausible reasons that may account for the disjuncture, researchers claimed that the heavy emphasis in FL curriculum design and classroom methods on language accuracy and grammatical form resulted in FL students' desire for teacher feedback on language form. In addition, researchers speculated that the ESL students in the study were generally more advanced in their L2 writing proficiency than the FL students; therefore, ESL students neither needed nor wanted grammar-focused feedback. Similarly, the subsequent study (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996) showed that the FL students preferred feedback on language form and that they interpreted the purpose of writing as language practice. In contrast, ESL students in the study demonstrated a stronger desire for feedback on content and form. In addition, both ESL and FL students reported difficulty in understanding specific grammar terminologies and symbols. The researchers found that the primary source of students' frustration was their not knowing what their teachers expected them to do with corrections and comments.

In addition to most studies in the U.S. schools, Lee (2008a, 2008b) examined and compared high English proficiency level and low English proficiency level students' reactions to teacher feedback in Hong Kong. Lee (2008a) showed that irrespective of proficiency level, students wanted more written comments from teachers. Over half (51.4%) of students of high proficiency would have preferred the teacher to give more feedback on content; 34.3% of the students would have preferred more emphasis on language while 11.4% of them would have preferred more feedback on organization. On the other hand, low proficiency students were more concerned with organization (28.6%) and language (28.6%). Low proficiency students showed less desire for feedback on content: only 23.8% students wanted it.

In summary, previous research regarding student views of teacher written feedback has consistently shown that students value teacher feedback and attach much more importance to it than other forms of feedback, such as peer feedback and self evaluation (Leki, 1991; Zhang, 1995). Most students claimed that they felt positively about receiving language feedback, and they also wanted to receive comments on content and the ideas underlying their writing (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz 1994, 1996; Ferris, 1995a; Lee, 2008a; Lee 2008b).

Without understanding teachers' feedback practices, it appears impossible to evaluate its effectiveness. On the other hand, without knowing how students feel about and respond to teacher feedback, teachers may be unaware of the effect their feedback practices have on student writing. Thus, it is crucial that student

attitudes and responses to teacher feedback are reported back to teachers, so they can develop reflective, productive, and effective feedback practices.

Existing research on teachers' feedback practices and student views of teacher feedback is mostly situated in other languages besides Chinese. There is a paucity of research that particularly addresses teachers' feedback in the TCFL context. Though TCFL writing bears a close relation to ESL writing, the TCFL context still has some distinct features. For example, most TCFL students in the United States are very familiar with practices such as process-writing and peer feedback that are used in their L1 composition classes. Therefore, they may feel comfortable and less anxious when subject to similar writing practices in their Chinese classes. Adult TCFL students have well-developed cognitive abilities that enable them to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate issues. Meanwhile, TCFL students, especially at beginning and intermediate levels, are often constrained by their developing but still limited language proficiency in the presentation of their ideas when writing an essay in Chinese. With this in mind, the present study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. How do TCFL teachers respond to student writing and what are teachers' beliefs, understandings, and knowledge regarding feedback?

2. What are student views of and preferences for teachers' feedback practices?

3. What are mismatches, if any, between teachers' feedback practices and student perceptions?

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHOD

SUBJECTS

The participants of the study included 38 TCFL students from two levels and

their three teachers at a university in the southwestern United States. Most of the

students had English as their native language. Only two identified themselves as

native speakers of Chinese as well as English, and one self-identified as a native

speaker of Cantonese as well as English. Among the 38 student subjects, nine

were heritage learners in Chinese. The majority of the students had taken Chinese

for two to three years. The level of students' Chinese proficiency varied, ranging

from intermediate low to advanced low, with most students at intermediate high

level. Students' language proficiency level was evaluated and provided to the

researcher by their teachers. The three teachers, referred to as Teacher A, Teacher

B, and Teacher C, were native Chinese speakers with teaching experience of

twenty, seven, and three years, respectively. Teachers A and C taught the same

level of Chinese. Teacher B taught a more advanced level of Chinese. 17 students,

13 students, and eight students from Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C's

classes participated in the research.

CONTEXT OF STUDY

The Chinese classes offered in the two levels were five-credit courses. The

students met their teachers for a 50-minute session every day, Monday through

Friday. No separate writing class was offered for these CFL students, but writing

was an important component in the syllabus. Instructors incorporated writing practice into their teaching schedules. In all classes, instructors used a multiple-draft writing process. Over the semester, students completed seven or eight multiple-draft essay cycles. Writing evaluation comprised 20% of students' final grades. In addition, standard grading rubrics were used in the classes, making it clear that all writing issues would be given attention.

DATA COLLECTION

To situate student views and preferences in the TCFL context in which feedback was provided, the researcher interpreted student data from questionnaires, combining it with and comparing it to data gathered from teacher interviews. The survey asked students to describe the actual feedback they received from their teachers, their attitudes toward teacher feedback, their personal preferences for teacher feedback, and their reactions to it. The students took the survey in class toward the end of the fall semester, so they had been through several writing cycles with their teachers and had familiarized themselves with their teachers' feedback practices. Since all student subjects considered themselves native English speakers, an English questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to students within the last 20 minutes of their Chinese classes by the researcher and their teachers. The researcher defined feedback for the students, informed them of her research purpose, and guaranteed the anonymity of the research results. In total, 38 surveys were returned and analyzed.

As for the teacher data, interviews were conducted with three teachers. The interviews were semi-structured, aiming at eliciting information about teacher

feedback practices and beliefs about providing feedback. Since the researcher and

the teachers were native speakers of Chinese, all interviews were conducted in

Chinese to facilitate smooth communication and to put the teachers at ease (see

Appendix B). An English version of the interview questions is provided in the

appendix.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative items on the questionnaire were tallied and summed. For the

unstructured-response items, the responses were analyzed and categorized. The

interviews with teachers were audiotaped, translated, and transcribed. Together,

the above multiple sources of data which shed light on teachers' feedback

practices and student views of feedback were interpreted and analyzed.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

The interview data shows that Teacher A was a responsible and conscientious Chinese teacher with considerable TCFL teaching experience. A three-draft writing process was followed in her classes, and over the semester students finished eight essay cycles. Almost all writing topics were closely related to textbook content. For each writing task, students would choose one from three prompts and compose an essay based on their understanding and preferences. The writing model used in Teacher A's class was as follows:

- Students composed a handwritten first draft.

- Teacher A provided coded indirect feedback to student writing by using a standard code system.

- Students received feedback and composed a second draft.

- Students brought the first and second drafts to one individual teacher-student conference.

- Teacher and students discussed the second draft during the tutorial.

- Students composed an electronic copy of final draft and turned it in to the teacher.

A holistic score was given on the first draft and revision scores were given on the second and the third drafts. After an essay cycle, Teacher A at times would hold a writing discussion in class to demonstrate some anonymous sample essays and clarify typically misused words or phrases.

When discussing the focus on feedback, Teacher A stated that she addressed all student writing issues, including content, ideas, organization, grammar, and mechanics. However, she acknowledged that most feedback on the first and the second drafts focused on language accuracy because ideas and content were not the main problems for most students. If students did have problems in ideas and content, Teacher A preferred discussing it with students during a subsequent tutorial. Beyond indirect coded feedback, Teacher A rarely gave a comment at the end of essay because she considered most comments too vague to be useful. Also, she speculated that students may experience difficulty in reading the teacher's illegible handwriting. As for the language of the comments, Teacher A claimed that comments in English would be more helpful since it was useless to give comments in Chinese if students couldn't read them. Unfortunately, Teacher A acknowledged that she gave comments in Chinese for the sake of convenience. Teacher A held an affirmative belief that students substantively benefited from the writing process and her feedback. From her point of view, the multiple-draft writing model and individual teacher-student conference, although time- and effort-consuming for teachers, are decisive factors in the success of teaching writing. Peer response did not occur in Teacher A's class, but she was willing to try peer response after a full consideration of its feasibility and implementation.

Similarly, Teacher B was a dedicated and innovative teacher who also applied a three-draft writing process in his class. The only operational difference between Teacher A and B was that students from Teacher A's class brought their second drafts to the teacher-student conference, whereas Teacher B gave written

feedback to the second draft, which he discussed with students during the teacher-student conference. Thus, Teacher B provided one more round of written feedback to his students. Teacher B kept a record of students' major mistakes and problems on a separate sheet. With the help of this sheet, Teacher B felt that his teacher-student conferences were more guided and customized. Compared to Teacher A, who spent around 15 minutes grading each 300-word draft essay, Teacher B spent 20 minutes on the first draft and 10 minutes on the second draft, each of which numbered about 450 words. Teacher B believed that spending a considerable amount of time on feedback was worthwhile and that students would definitely benefit from their feedback and individual teacher-student conferences.

Like Teacher A, Teacher B stated that giving a comment at the end of essay was exhausting and ineffective. He doubted whether students would take it seriously. Thus, he occasionally wrote comments of praise or to point out some typical mistakes in a student writing. Teacher B assumed that his students had sufficient knowledge of Chinese to understand his comments in Chinese. As for the focus of feedback, Teacher B stated that linguistic accuracy is not his only criteria for his students. This was reflected in the analytic score he gave to students. The grading rubric he provided to students included components, such as "establishes as a context," "demonstrates critical thinking," "creates an organizing structure," and "demonstrates command of written language conventions." Teacher B explained that at the start of the semester he gave a holistic score to student writing but after the mid-term he started using an analytic score. With a separate score for each aspect of the grading rubric, students were

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able to get a full picture of their weaknesses and strengths in writing. According to Teacher B, all students were given a handout about how to read the analytic score. Teacher B noted that except for a few untreatable errors, most errors and problems could be solved by teacher written feedback or a subsequent individual teacher-student conference. Peer feedback did not occur, and Teacher B had some reservations about its effectiveness.

Teacher C followed the feedback practices of Teacher A. Like Teacher A, Teacher C gave a holistic score on the first draft and then gave an additional score for both the revised second and third draft. The focus of feedback, according to Teacher C, was based on the grading rubric. She stressed that it was important to take individual characteristics into consideration when giving feedback. Thus, Teacher C's feedback was not constrained by the traditional feedback practice which focuses on general issues on the first draft and local issues on the second and third drafts. If students had problems in content or ideas at the final writing stage, she was not hesitant to point them out. Teacher C at times wrote a Chinese comment at the end of essay for students. Teachers A, B and C all agreed that both teacher written feedback and teacher-student conferences are most effective. Individual meetings opened a channel for direct communication between teachers and students, and they preempted potential misunderstandings.

STUDENT ATTITUDES, VIEWS, AND REACTIONS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

How did students view and react to teacher feedback? The questionnaire findings show that teacher feedback was the most common response students

received. Other sources of feedback included peer feedback, self-editing, and

feedback from Chinese friends (see Table 1). 64.9% of the students received

multiple sources of feedback, while 35% of them only got feedback from their

teachers.

Table 1

Sources of Writing Feedback

Question 2: What writing feedback do you usually receive in your Chinese classes? (multiple answers)	
Teacher feedback	97.3%
Peer feedback	10.8%
Self-editing	43.2%
Feedback from Chinese friends or tutor	43.2%

Table 2

The Most Helpful and Effective Type of Feedback

Question 3: In your opinion, what kind of feedback is the most helpful and effective?	
Teacher feedback	77.1%
Peer feedback	20.0%
Self-editing	2.8%
Feedback from my Chinese friends or tutor	0

While over half of the students received feedback from multiple sources, 77%

of students identified teacher feedback as the most helpful and effective kind (see

Table 2). Students were also asked to justify their choice. Advocates of teacher

feedback explained their choices as below. First, they trusted teachers' language

knowledge as native Chinese speakers. Students wrote the following comments in the questionnaire: "Given that the teacher's native language is Chinese the teacher feedback will be the most accurate and appropriate" and "I feel that my teacher's feedback is the most helpful because she is a native speaker of Chinese and I can trust the feedback she gives me is correct." Second, familiarity with the students' levels of Chinese proficiency enabled teachers to provide appropriate and customized feedback. For example, students wrote the following: "I think teacher feedback is the most helpful because the teacher knows what you are learning and have learned and he/she can help more with giving feedback" and "Teacher feedback is the most helpful because they know what I have been studying and what I mean when I make mistakes whereas a tutor or friend may be confused." Third, compared with peer response and self-editing, students thought teacher feedback was more reliable and trustworthy. This preference is reflected in the following students' explanations: "Myself and my peers are still learning (sic), so it is most helpful to have my teacher's feedback;" "Teacher knows best. A peer may not always be right like Chinese teachers;" and "Sometimes peer feedback can be very vague."

   With respect to the effect of teacher feedback on student writing improvement, most students agreed that teacher feedback had a positive impact (see Table 3). The results of this question suggest that students were generally happy about the quality of teacher feedback, which was in conjunction with the three instructors' beliefs about efficacy of teacher feedback.

Table 3

The Effectiveness of Teachers' Feedback

Question 5: What impact does the teacher's feedback have on your writing improvement?	
The teacher's feedback definitely helps my Chinese writing	65.7%
It probably helps to some extent, but I am not sure	22.8%
I don't think the teacher's feedback helps	5.7%
None of the above, please explain	5.7%

Table 4

Focus of Teacher Written Feedback

Question 11: What aspect of your writing does your Chinese teacher's feedback mostly focus on?	
Grammar	60.0%
Organization	7.5%
Ideas and content	0.0
All aspects of writing	32.5%

As we examine student attitudes to the overall balance between content, organization, and grammar (see Tables 4 and 5), there seems to be a mismatch between student preferences and what they actually received. Only one third of students (32.5%) agreed that their teacher attended to all aspects of their writing and over half of the students (60%) received more teacher feedback on grammar. On the other hand, a majority of students (61.5%) would prefer a balanced coverage of feedback focus. Only 30.7% of the students would prefer more feedback on grammar. In general, there seemed a tendency for students to wish

for more teacher feedback addressing all aspects of writing, instead of mostly

focusing on grammar.

Table 5

Focus of Received Teacher Written Feedback

Question 12: What aspect of your writing do you most want to have your teacher' attention and feedback focus on?	
Grammar	30.7%
Organization	7.6%
Ideas and content	0.0
Every aspect of writing is important to me	61.5%

Table 6

Language of Received Written Comments

Question 8: In what language is the feedback from your Chinese teacher usually written?	
Mostly Chinese	65.0%
Mostly English	0.0
A mixture of Chinese and English	10.0%
My Chinese teacher only uses marks or codes	18.9%

When asked about the language of teachers' comments (see Table 6), the

majority of students (65.0%) received comments in Chinese. As few as 10% of

the students received a mixture of English and Chinese comments. However,

when examining students' inclination, 43.2% of the students favored a

combination of Chinese and English in the teachers' comments (see Table 7),

followed by a smaller percentage (40.5%) who favored feedback in Chinese.

English comments were not welcomed by students, with merely 5.4% of students

preferring it.

Table 7

Language of Written Comments

Question 9: What language do you prefer that your teacher use when giving you feedback?	
Chinese	40.5%
English	5.4%
A mixture of Chinese and English	43.2%
I don't care	10.8%

Explaining their inclination to receive feedback in Chinese, some students

liked to read Chinese in a contextualized comment. For instance, one student

wrote, "I prefer receiving feedback in Chinese because it is the language I am

studying and it makes for good practice." Others wrote, "I like Chinese feedback

because it helps me in context with Chinese. If I don't understand though, I may

need a Chinese or English verbal explanation" and "when my teacher uses

Chinese I learn extra vocabulary pertaining to sentence order and correction, and

if I don't understand my teacher will use a single English word." Some other

students judiciously expressed their preferences for the language of the comments.

They suggested using different languages to serve different occasions and

purposes. Students wrote that "I need Chinese feedback on corrections on

grammar or word choice, but on organization or content, English feedback allows

me to understand what the teacher advises" and "I believe feedback in both languages helps me understand the reasoning better."

Proponents of English feedback stated that English feedback facilitated the exchange of thoughts between teachers and students. Students wrote the following: "If I am writing something incorrectly in Chinese odds are if you explain it in Chinese I will not be able to understand and my writing will not improve;" "Sometimes the explanation can be hard to understand in Chinese;" and "sometimes the suggestions my teacher gave is hard to understand, so a English definition would be appreciated."

What were student attitudes toward error correction in the teacher feedback? Table 8 shows that students almost unanimously wanted, expected, and valued teacher feedback. They felt comfortable when the teacher pointed out weaknesses in their writing, and they held a positive belief that error correction helped their learning.

Table 8

Attitude toward Error Correction

Question 13: How do you feel about error correction in your writing feedback? (circle all that apply)	
I value and appreciate error correction by the teacher	43.6%
A great number of error corrections in red make me feel intimidated and disappointed in myself	7.3%
I am comfortable with error correction because making mistakes is a part of learning a language	47.3%

I don't think error correction helps a lot	1.8%

When asked about the error feedback strategies they preferred specifically (see Table 9), the majority (67.6%) of respondents opted for direct error correction. It is apparent that students wanted the teacher to play a more active role in error correction. Students explained that direct error correction was clear and understandable. It helped students prevent or minimize similar errors from happening in the future. For example, students wrote the following: "Letting small errors slip by will eventually breed bad writing habits;" "It really does help. Seeing directly what is wrong prevents me from doing it again;" and "I feel this is the most helpful because then you know everything you have done wrong. If not all errors are corrected, I might miss the mistake or get it wrong again." Some other students stated that direct error correction was the most reliable way to discover their errors in Chinese. For example, one student wrote, "Without the correct answers, we would still not know if the changes are corrected." Direct error correction was also viewed as a quick and convenient strategy for revision by some students. For instance, students thought that "It helps me improve faster if I know everything that is wrong" and "I want to learn quickly, this requires feedback." A few students held reservations about other ways of error correction, such as marking and coding. For example, students explained that "Sometimes it is easy to miss some errors if only the most serious one is marked. The code used can also be confusing at times" and "I believe directly correcting is the most helpful, because sometimes I am confused by a correction code or it didn't go into

enough detail (give enough guidance) for me to properly correct my work on my

own."

Table 9

The Most Helpful Strategy of Error Correction

Question 14: In your opinion, what is the most helpful way for your teacher to address your errors in writing?	
Correct all my errors directly	67.6%
Only correct the most serious errors, not every single error	2.7%
Don't give me the correct answers; just indicate my errors by underlining or circling my mistakes or by using a correction code	27.0%
Don't correct or indicate my errors; let me correct errors by myself	0.0
I do not care	2.7%

Compared with the vast majority, only 27% of the students supported the

teacher practice of providing indirect error correction. These students

acknowledged the difficulty and inconvenience of attempting to correct errors by

themselves, but they noted that indirect coded feedback promoted long-term

language acquisition. A student wrote that "It takes more thoughts to correct the

errors myself than to be given the right answers. However, first I need to know

what errors exist in order to properly address them." Other students agreed, saying

that "I feel that the teacher should not give the answer, but rather indicate what is

wrong and let the student figure out how to correct the mistake. I feel the student

would learn better this way" and "If I have to figure out my errors, I have to do

more research to find the answers and thus learn more." Merely 2.7% of the students hoped that the teacher would only address major errors and leave minor errors for students to fix.

An investigation of difficulties students had encountered in applying teacher feedback to revision reveals consistency with suggestions students offered for teacher feedback. Results showed a mismatch between teachers' prioritization of the coding system and students' inability to decode it. Table 10 shows that the biggest challenge to students was understanding the coding system used by the teacher. 21.1% of the students could not understand the teacher's written comments, which might be caused by illegible handwriting or a failure to understand comments made in Chinese.

Table 10

Students' Challenges

What challenges prevent you from using your teacher's feedback?	
I don't understand my teacher's written comments	21.1%
I don't understand the code or marks my teacher uses	52.6%
My teacher's comments are so extensive and discouraging that I lose interest in reading them	5.3%
My teacher does not give much constructive feedback or useable strategies	21.1%

Overall, the survey data suggests that students responded favorably to teacher feedback. They were satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of teacher feedback. Where disjunctions occurred, student subjects wanted more input from

the teacher to address every aspect of writing. Moreover, research results show that students wished for a combination of Chinese and English comments. As for error correction, a vast majority of students particularly welcomed direct correction. Students reported frustration in understanding correction codes used by their teachers. Possible reasons that cause the frustration are provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

RESULT DISCUSSION

IMPACT OF TEACHERS' FEEDBACK PRACTICES ON STUDENT

WRITING

Complying with recommended principles in L1 and L2 writing, a process-oriented multiple-draft writing cycle was adopted in this CFL setting. Rather than viewing writing as a fixed final product, the writing process in the study emphasized substantial revision. Student subjects in the study usually had to produce three drafts as part of each writing project. Teachers asked students to handwrite the first two drafts and turn in an electronic copy as the final draft. In the study, teachers intervened with feedback throughout the writing process. All teachers in the study agreed that if the teacher responded only on the final draft, that feedback would have little effect because of the possibility that student writers would not even spend time reading them. Conversely, they believe that the three-draft writing cycle encourages students to attend to teacher feedback, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing, and take initiatives to revise their writing. Although the three teachers spent considerable time providing feedback to multiple drafts, they affirmatively believed that students rewarded teachers' efforts by showing apparent improvements in their writing. According to all three teachers, teacher-student conferences are another valuable avenue for teachers to give feedback and instruction to students. The most apparent advantage of teacher-student conferences is the immediacy they allow for discussion, negotiation, and clarification of writing texts. These three CFL

teachers highly valued and recommended the practices of responding to multiple-drafts and holding teacher-student writing conferences.

Student subjects, in general, held favorable attitudes toward teacher feedback. An overwhelming majority of student subjects identified teacher feedback as their main source of feedback. 77.1% of the students considered their teacher as their most trustworthy and helpful responder. Qualitative data gathered from the student survey is also encouraging in this regard. For instance, a student reported that "Individual writing tutoring is good." Others said, "My Chinese teacher provides very effective feedback" and "I think the feedback given is already very effective, I like discussing the paper comments afterwards then being allowed to correct it again afterwards to be sure to correct my mistakes." Both teachers and students felt that teacher feedback on student writing is essential. An investigation of teachers' feedback practices and student perceptions of it reveals some discrepancies. Reasons that may account for the disjuncture are also discussed below.

FOCUS OF TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Earlier studies of teacher feedback in the single-draft writing process showed that teachers focused predominantly on language errors in student writing (e.g., Cumming, 1985; Zamel, 1985). With the advent of the process approach in English and ESL, studies began to show a shift in teachers' focus away from language to other writing issues (e.g., Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Conrad & Glodstein, 1999; Ferris, 1995a; Ferris, 1997). Researchers recommend that teachers strike a balanced coverage in their written feedback, focusing on issues

of content, structure, organization, and language (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Ferris, 2003). However, it has also been argued that the form/meaning dichotomy may be unhelpful, and skilled teachers will vary their feedback according to contextual features such as the writing ability of each student, the genre of the writing task, etc (Ferris et al., 1997). In the context of multiple-draft writing, teachers are advised to respond to content and organization in the preliminary stages of writing and confine grammatical correction to the later stages of writing. Nevertheless, recent research has increasingly shown that the order in which feedback is given is not important and that the teacher can offer a mixture of feedback to students (William, 2005). But it is crucial that teachers should not comment on everything in a single draft, because students easily become frustrated and overwhelmed.

In the study, the three teachers did not follow the practice of addressing issues with content and ideas in the first draft and focusing on language issues in the second and third drafts. Instead, they responded to all aspects of writing in every draft, although more focus was on language. They assumed that most students did not have much trouble with content, ideas, and organization. If a student did struggle with issues of content, ideas, and organization, the teacher usually gave a general comment on the first draft or discussed the issue in the teacher-student conference. The students surveyed reported that they received the most attention on grammar, but they wanted teachers to address all aspects of writing. Students' quantitative willingness to receive a balanced coverage of writing echoed their qualitative responses, in which they expressed desire for the teacher to "include comments on the overall fluency and organization of the piece as well as the

quality of the writing itself as opposed to one's correct grammar and usage."

Other students suggested that teachers "Maybe [do] more work on the writing

content" and provide "more feedback about the ideas, structure, organization, and

sentence fluency of my essays, not just grammar. I want an essay that is [a] good

read and sounds nice, not just one that is grammatical correct." Another student

"would suggest my Chinese teacher correct organization mistakes as well as offer

suggestions on content and ideas. This will help students to think more in depth

when writing their papers."

   In the meanwhile, students also reported that teachers' error correction helped

them to avoid future mistakes, improve their language accuracy, and clarify their

ideas. The results of this study suggest that students appreciate teachers pointing

out their grammar problems. This finding echoes earlier studies of L2 students'

opinions about teacher feedback (Leki, 1991; Ferris 1995a). Moreover, survey

results show that they also value teachers' suggestions about their ideas, content,

and organization, which is consistent with the findings of studies such as

Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994), McCurdy (1992) and Ferris (1995a).

FORM OF TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK

   The three teachers in the study responded to student writing with the same

code system. All teachers interviewed felt that coded indirect feedback provides

sufficient information for students to locate, reflect on, and fix their problems.

More importantly, they believed that indirect feedback helps to develop students'

problem-solving and independent editing skills. The survey findings show that

students generally held positive attitudes toward teacher error correction. They

valued and appreciated teacher error correction. Contrary to teachers' beliefs, a majority of student subjects (67.6%) preferred direct correction. Less than one third of students (27.0%) favored more implicit error feedback. Students' desire for more explicit error feedback was also found in Lee's research (2008a, 2008b). Results of Lee's study show that both high English proficiency and low English proficiency students in secondary schools in Hong Kong wished for more explicit error correction. Lee (2008a) explains that student preference could be a direct result of "the teacher-dominated approach to feedback" (p. 156). Due to the lack of student-centered activities in the writing process, students have become more reliant on the teacher. They wanted to be told what to do rather than take initiative to direct their own learning.

The second reason that might account for student preferences for direct feedback is their difficulty in handling indirect coded feedback. The three teachers in the study claimed that students were aware of and familiar with the correction code. Nevertheless, student surveys and qualitative responses demonstrate that students encountered difficulty in understanding teachers' code. In the qualitative responses, students stated that teachers should "Better indicate the meaning of codes, sometimes they don't seem to match with the online guide," that "More direct correction or explanation of code would help me a lot," and that "sometimes a correction code is confusing." Failure to understand the meaning of correction code prevents students from making use of teacher feedback. Similarly, studies of ESL students' problems with teacher feedback have suggested that L2

students may struggle with understanding teachers' symbols and terminology (Cohen, 1987; Leki, 1990). Therefore, a clear explanation and consistent use of correction code is crucial for teachers when offering indirect coded feedback.

Another plausible explanation for students' failure to utilize coded indirect feedback has to do with the language of feedback. Teachers were asked about their chosen language of feedback in the interview. Given that students probably cannot read comments made in Chinese, Teacher A thought that comments should be written in English. However, she often gave Chinese comments for the sake of convenience. Teacher C mostly gave Chinese comments unless she felt a need to explain something beyond students' Chinese knowledge. Teacher B insisted on using Chinese comments, and he believed that students in his class would be able to read his comments. When students were asked about the language of teachers' comments they actually received, 65.0% of the students felt they received the most comments in Chinese. A vast majority (43.2%) of the students in the study expressed their preference for receiving a mixture of Chinese and English for teacher comments, while 40.5% of the students opted for Chinese feedback. Therefore, teachers are advised to vary their feedback language according to individual Chinese proficiency level and preferences.

PREFERENCE FOR TEACHER WRITTEN COMMENTS

The three teachers in the study mainly responded to student writing by using correction code on the first draft and providing oral feedback afterwards. Teachers A, B, and C occasionally gave a comment at the end of essay. When they wrote

the essay-end commentary, they most often wrote encouraging comments to motivate students or they pointed out a typical problem in student writing. For the most part, they would like to save the time it takes to write comments and instead focus on teacher-student conferences. It is understandable that most teachers can hardly afford the time to write a paragraph for each piece of writing. However, if teachers rarely wrote comments on student texts, it might make students curious about their teachers' impression of their writing apart from the judgment indicated by correction codes on the paper. The qualitative data generated from the survey reinforces students' willingness to receive comments. Students mentioned the following: "I would like an overall feedback written at the end of each writing assignment;" "I would like to see a quick comment at the end of the essay to see what kind of impression my writing leaves (e.g., good organization but could see more new vocabulary or good ideas but need a more organized structure);" and "My teacher could include more extensive comments on my writing, maybe a conclusive opinion at the end." Students' requests for more written comments accords with the findings of previous studies (Lee, 2008b; Goldstein, 2005). Written commentary can help students understand how their teachers are reading their writing and identify their own strengths and weaknesses, particularly in areas other than language accuracy. One issue arising from the discussion is that teacher written comment is very informative but time-consuming. To tackle this dilemma, Teacher B resorted to using an analytic scoring rubric for the first draft: he gave scores on specific criteria for the writing assignment.

Chapter 6

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research results suggest the following pedagogical implications for TCFL

teachers.

THE NEED TO CLARIFY RESPONDING BEHAVIORS

Cohen (1987) reviewed L1 and L2 writing research and noted that "even in a

course with an enlightened, process-oriented teacher, the students may still

misinterpret the teacher's comments" (p. 58). Thus, first and foremost, TCFL

teachers need to explain the overall philosophy of feedback, the purposes of

feedback, and the potential short- and long-term benefits students might receive

from utilizing feedback (Hyland, 2003; Saito, 1994). Only when students

recognize the value of teacher feedback can they hold a positive attitude toward it

and take initiative to make revisions based upon it.

Second, TCFL teachers should clearly explain their feedback practices and

procedures to students and establish expectations so that misunderstandings and

misinterpretations may be minimized or avoided. Teachers can do so by

explaining feedback procedures to students at the beginning of the semester and

modeling feedback practices in the class. Teachers can constantly reinforce

students' understanding of and familiarity with feedback practices by providing

reminders throughout the semester, holding class discussion regarding how to

read and use feedback, allocating class time for students to ask questions about

feedback, etc. It is undesirable and unfair that a teacher gives a student a low

grade and criticizes his/her bad writing without informing him/her how to interpret and use feedback. Teachers can show an anonymous essay with feedback on a projector or in a handout in class and then guide students to read, interpret, and respond to teacher feedback.

Third, it is equally important for teachers to attend to student views and perceptions about feedback practices and find out whether there are any discrepancies between teacher feedback practices and student views of them. Fourth, while encouraging students to understand and use teacher feedback, teachers should be cautious about appropriation. It is vitally important for teachers to create a supportive environment, so that students are comfortable expressing their doubts, concerns, and questions about teacher feedback. Students should be encouraged to express their thoughts and reflections on teacher feedback when the teacher allocates class time for a group discussion, during teacher-student conferences, or in students' written reflections.

VARY FOCUS OF FEEDBACK

Both the teacher and student will get tired if the teacher tries to address all writing problems in a student's essay. Many language teachers follow the order of focusing more on content issues in the earlier stages of a writing cycle and addressing more language issues in the final stages. For instance, the teacher might ask students to compose an essay about environmental protection in Chinese. In the early phases of the writing process, the teacher wants to see whether the draft meets the primary requirements of the writing task, has a good organization, and shows a focused theme. On the second draft, the teacher wants

to make sure the essay uses appropriate discourse connectors and has statistical evidence to support the argument. And on the third draft, the teacher pays attention to particular language points such as the use of comparative structures in Chinese.

Ferris (2003, 2007) stresses that teachers should not be constrained by this rigid order of feedback focus. Actually, TCFL teachers should be flexible enough to construct and prioritize their feedback focus to accommodate different writing goals, specifications of tasks, individual needs, and individual Chinese proficiency levels. For example, the teacher might mainly address certain language points such as the use of appropriate discourse connectors in the first draft. It is also possible that the teacher asks low proficiency students to work on organization issues in the third draft. The teacher can customize feedback focus for different writing projects and different writing stages within a project; it is vitally important that students are fully aware of the teacher's expectation prior to embarking on the project.

MORE EFFECTIVE BUT LESS BURDENED ERROR CORRECTION

Most student subjects in the study expressed a preference for explicit and directive error correction. However, this finding does not necessarily mean that TCFL teachers should switch to providing explicit error correction, because existing studies show that indirect feedback seemed to benefit student writers more over time.

The discrepancy should be analyzed from three aspects. First, low proficiency TCFL students may not have adequate knowledge to handle error correction on

their own even if errors are pointed out by the teacher. Using indirect feedback involves more language knowledge on the student's part; therefore, if students are not sufficiently proficient in Chinese, they may not benefit from indirect correction. Instead, direct error correction may help them more.

Second, some students prefer direct error correction because they may simply read through their corrected draft instead of making a lot of efforts toward revising. Besides informing students of the effect and value of indirect feedback, there is much teachers can do to have students engaged in the error correction. For example, the TCFL teacher may work with students to give error correction to an anonymous essay; in this situation, the teacher would give an anonymous essay with indirect feedback to students and would have them work in groups to make the revisions. Students are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward error correction and assume responsibility for their own writing development when they play a more active role in the error correction.

Third, students may prefer direct error correction because they experience difficulty in understanding and utilizing indirect error correction. Many students reported experiencing confusion and encountering inconsistencies when reading indirect coded correction. If a TCFL teacher chooses to employ a set of correction codes to indicate error, he/she should make sure that the code system is clear and simple. A complicated code system will have a counterproductive effect on the error correction. It is essential that the teacher explain and model the coded indirect error correction at the beginning of the semester, and it is dangerous to simply assume that students understand the code system. Some teachers may give

students sheets with the key to the code system in the first class but then never spend time explaining and reminding students. If the teacher fails to call students' attention to the code system, it is very likely that students will discard the sheet and have no idea about the meaning of codes at all. To maximize the effect of coded indirect error correction, it is advisable that the teacher illustrate the code system and then model the application of the coded error correction, so that students will gain a better understanding of why the teacher would choose a specific code for an error and how to respond to the error. The teacher can also empower students to create their own codes for error correction. By doing this, students will not feel as if they are being given a code system from an autocratic figure. Instead, they will be engaged in creating a code system which will help improve their Chinese writing skills. After the code system is established, the teacher should implement the code system in a consistent manner and constantly go over the code system with students.

Existing research shows little evidence regarding whether indirect feedback should be coded or uncoded. It seems that uncoded indirect feedback helps students as much as coded feedback. Thus, teachers are urged to consider student preferences when deciding on pedagogical strategies and approaches. For instance, TCFL teachers can invite students to participate in responding to coded and uncoded indirect feedback: after trying both, if a majority of students opt for uncoded feedback, then the teacher can consider using uncoded feedback which is easy and time-saving.

Creating an error log is another practice that is beneficial to both teacher and students. On one hand, it helps students to track their success in correcting errors. It also allows students to monitor their awareness of how well they control patterned errors. On the other hand, with an error log to reference, the TCFL teacher is in a better position to provide individualized writing conferences with students. In addition, an error log can be integrated into an end-semester writing portfolio.

THE PROVISION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

Aside from error correction, many teachers can hardly afford the effort and time needed to write a detailed comment. However, students in the study requested more written comments, sending a clear message to teachers that students want more information about their overall written performance. To balance his workload and his students' wish for comments, Teacher B in the study attempted to use an analytic scoring rubric to indicate students' strengths and weaknesses. Analytic scoring saves the teacher's time she/he would otherwise spend in writing a lengthy comment.

In addition to the analytic score, there is a need for TCFL teachers to explore other alternatives. For example, students can include a form at the end of their drafts (see Table 11). In this model, students would fill out the first three columns in the form, leaving the last column free for teachers to write a comment. With a better understanding of what students have gone through, teachers are more likely to develop a brief but helpful commentary. There is no need for teachers to give an extensive summary; rather, they can just focus on the most significant

feedback points in the paper. The comment in the form will also serve as a note

for the teacher-student conference.

Moreover, TCFL teachers should be flexible in choosing the language of

commentary. It is not necessarily desirable to write Chinese or English

commentary for all students. TCFL teachers should take various factors, such as

individual language knowledge, content of commentary, use of terminology, etc

to decide the language of comment. Ferris (2003) gives a checklist of suggestions

for writing clear and helpful comments.

Table 11

Feedback Table

I feel I did well at······	I had difficulty in ······	I would like to receive teacher feedback on ······	Teacher feedback:

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Without understanding teachers' feedback practices, it appears impossible to evaluate their effectiveness. On the other side of the issue, being aware of student views of teacher feedback helps teachers adjust feedback to cater to different individuals. Furthermore, previous ESL studies demonstrate that student reactions and attitudes to teacher written feedback are influenced by teachers' beliefs and practices. Thus, it is crucial that student attitudes and responses to teacher feedback are reported back to teachers to help teachers develop reflective, productive, and effective feedback practices.

Analysis of teachers' responses to student writing is a crucial, yet neglected, area in the TCFL context. In particular, little is known about how TCFL teachers respond to student writing and whether discrepancies exist between teachers' feedback practices and student perceptions and preferences. This study investigated teachers' feedback practices and student attitudes and preferences regarding teachers' responses. Student data from questionnaires was interpreted with teacher data from interviews. The results suggest that the feedback practices of the three teachers generally accorded with recommended principles. Most students thought favorably of teacher feedback and agreed that it has a positive impact on students. However, the research findings also reveal some discrepancies between teachers' feedback practices and student views of teachers' responses. For example, given a choice, student would opt for a balanced coverage of all writing issues in the teacher feedback. Many students

expressed a preference for direct error correction and essay-end commentary. In conclusion, the research recommends that TCFL teachers be flexible enough to customize feedback focus, forms of error correction, options of commentary, etc to individual students. Although it is hard to accommodate every student's needs, it is important that teachers take students' perceptions and expectations into consideration when deciding on pedagogical strategies and approaches.

Chapter 8

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study examined teachers' feedback practices and student views of teacher response in a multiple-draft TCFL context. Given the limited research participants from one university, teachers must be careful when applying results and solutions generated from this research to other contexts. Improvements that could be made include the following: including studies conducted in other foreign language contexts in the literature review, replicating this research on a larger scale in the TCFL context, and minimizing and avoiding language ambiguity in the questionnaire, so that more accurate student responses could be obtained. Furthermore, this study did not investigate whether students' Chinese proficiency levels have an effect on their preferences regarding focus on and form of feedback. If student variables are taken into consideration, results generated from the study would be more valid and reliable.

In matters of directions for further research, this research mainly employs data from teacher interviews and student questionnaires. To triangulate with data in the study, there is a need for future studies to include other sources of data such as teachers' actual responses on students' texts and interviews with students. In addition, this study did not investigate a connection between teachers' responding behaviors and students' overall writing achievement. An additional extension of this research might explore possible similarities and differences between TCFL students and a bigger population of ESL students with regard to their views of written feedback.

Despite its limitations, this study on teachers' practices and student views of written feedback has provided encouragement to today's TCFL field that some TCFL teachers' feedback practices largely comply with feedback guidelines. More importantly, this paper offers teachers a variety of strategies to respond effectively to student writing.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE ON WRITING FEEDBACK OF CHINESE CLASS

Ⅰ.**Student background information:**

What is your native language? _____

What Chinese class (es) are you taking now? _____

How long have you been learning Chinese? _____

Does anyone in your family speak Chinese? _____

Ⅱ**. Feedback:**

Please circle one choice that best describes your opinion and experience of receiving writing feedback on your **Chinese essay** from your Chinese language teacher.

1. How do you perceive your writing competence in Chinese?

A. Fairly good   B. Good   C. Average   D. Below average

2. What writing feedback do you usually receive in your Chinese classes? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. Teacher feedback

B. Peer feedback

C. Self-editing

D. Feedback from my Chinese friends or tutor

3. In your opinion, what kind of feedback is **the most** helpful and effective?

A. Teacher feedback

B. Peer feedback

C. Self-editing

D. Feedback from my Chinese friends or tutor

Please explain your answer for question 3

_____

_____

4. Which of the following descriptions best represents your idea of using **peer feedback** in the Chinese writing process?

A. It helps my writing because it provides other people's insights and we can always learn from our classmates.

B. I think it depends on whether or not the partner has more knowledge than I do.

C. I don't think I can trust other students; after all we are all students, not teachers.

D. I am not sure, but I'd like to try it.

5. What impact does the **teacher's feedback** play on your writing improvement?

A. The teacher's feedback definitely helps my Chinese writing.

B. It probably helps to some extent, but I am not sure.

C. I don't think the teacher's feedback helps.

D. None of the above, please explain
   _____

6. What kind of feedback do you usually receive from your Chinese teacher? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. Written feedback on my writing assignment

B. Oral feedback from teacher-student conference

C. Online feedback

D. Other, please specify_____

7. How often do you get written feedback from your Chinese teacher?

A. On every writing assignment

B. On most writing assignments

C. On some writing assignments

D. I rarely get feedback from my Chinese teacher

8. In what language is the feedback from your Chinese teacher usually written?

A. Mostly Chinese

B. Mostly English

C. A mixture of Chinese and English

D. My Chinese teacher only uses marks or codes

9. What language do you prefer your teacher use when giving you feedback?

A. Chinese

B. English

C. A mixture of Chinese and English

D. I don't care

Please explain your answer for question 9
_____

10. As a student, do you know how your writing assignment is evaluated by your Chinese teacher? In other words, are you given a grading rubric along with the writing task?

A. My teacher gives grading rubrics, and I often use them when writing.

B. My teacher indeed gives grading rubrics, but I often forget to use them.

C. My teacher doesn't give grading rubrics, but I want to have them.

D. My teacher doesn't give grading rubrics, and I wouldn't use them anyway.

11. What aspect of your writing does your Chinese teacher's feedback mostly focus on?

A. Grammar

B. Organization

C. Ideas and content
 D. All aspects of writing

12. What aspect of your writing do you most want to have your teacher's attention and feedback focus on?

A. Grammar

B. Organization

C. Ideas and content

D. Every aspect of writing is important to me

13. How do you feel about error correction in your writing feedback? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. I value and appreciate error correction by the teacher.

B. A great number of error corrections in red makes me feel intimated and disappointed about myself.

C. I am comfortable with error correction because making mistakes is a part of learning a language.

D. I don't think error correction helps a lot.

14. In your opinion, what is **the most** helpful way for your teacher to address your errors in writing?

A. Correct all my errors directly.

B. Only correct the most serious errors, not every single error.

C. Don't give me the correct answers; just indicate my errors by underlining or circling my mistakes, or by using a correction code.

D. Don't correct or indicate my errors; let me correct errors by myself.

E. I do not care.

Please state the reasons for your preference

_____

_____

15. In reality, what is the most common feedback you have received about your errors? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. My teacher corrects or indicates my errors

B. My teacher makes suggestions for me to figure out the correct answer

C. My teacher proposes an alternative way of expressing my ideas

D. My teacher asks questions about my writing

E. My teacher makes a comment at the end of the essay

F. My teacher only gives a grade.

16. In what stage of your writing process, does your teacher offer you feedback?

A. My teacher only offers written feedback after I hand in my final draft.

B. My teacher offers me a variety of feedback throughout my writing process.

C. My teacher only offers feedback when I ask for it.

D. My teacher rarely offers feedback.

Ⅲ. **Student strategies for handling feedback.**

17. What do you usually do when you get your paper back?

A. Just put it away

B. Reread my paper

C. Revise or rewrite it

D. Other, please specify _____

18. What follow-up writing activities does your teacher offer you after returning your writing? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. Usually no follow-up activities

B. Revision and rewriting

C. Individual tutoring with the teacher

D. Other, please specify_____

19. What challenges prevent you from using your teacher's feedback? **(Circle all that apply)**

A. I don't understand my teacher's written comments.

B. I don't understand the code or marks my teacher uses.

C. My teacher's comments are so extensive and discouraging that I lose interest in reading them.

D. My teacher does not give much constructive feedback or strategies that I can use.

20. What do you do if you have any questions, doubts and concerns about your teacher's feedback?

A. I will discuss them with my classmates.

B. I will ignore them.

C. I will talk to my teacher before I write another essay

D. Other, please specify

_____

21. What suggestions might you have for your Chinese teacher to improve the effectiveness of feedback on your writing?

_____

_____

THE END

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B

中文老师访问问题

SURVEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE

INSTRUCTORS

Ⅰ.基本情况：

1. 您的母语是什么？

2. 目前你教授什么中文课程？

3. 您从事中文教学有多长时间了？

4. 你目前学生的中文水平如何？

5. 鉴于学生目前的中文水平，在中文写作方面你希望他们能达到什么样的目标？

Ⅱ.关于反馈的问题：

6. 平均每个学期您会布置几次作文？布置作文的过程大概是什么样子？(比如：作文都是和课本内容有关吗？每次的字数要求是多少？给学生多长时间完成？作文批改过程是什么样子的？一般是您还是您的助教帮助批改学生作文？)

7. 您觉得批改学生作文的主要目的是什么？

8. 每次布置学生的作文您都会批改麽还是有选择的批改？

9. 一般在学生写作的什么阶段，您会提供建议或者评语？

10. 除了亲自批改作业以外，您会使用其他方式吗？比如说同学之间互相评改，学生自评。您以前尝试使用过吗？那为什么现在没有继续使用了？

11. 除了书面评改作文以外，您会使用其他方式吗？比如说口头提出建议，或者在网上修改？

12. 每次布置写作作业的时候，您会给学生评分标准吗？每次是使用同一个评分标准还是有所不同？

13. 您觉得学生知道您的评分重点吗？

Ⅲ.关于反馈的深度问题：

14. 平均每次您需要多长时间完成批改作文的工作？

15. 批改作文需要花费老师很多的时间和精力。这种付出您觉得有收获吗？

16. 一般书面批改作业您是用中文还是英文，还是主要用符号标示？

17. 您觉得每次评语的重点会有所不同吗？不同的写作题目，学生个人的情况等众多因素都可能会影响您的评语。您会因人而异的提供写作评语吗？

18. 提供评语的时候？您一般主要关注学生的哪一方面？比如说语法，结构，内容等等。

19. 您一般如何给学生评语？比如说是纠正学生的错误，还是提出你的疑惑，还是在作文最后给出一小段评语，或者最后给一个分数。

20. 您觉得上面提到的给予评语的方式有效吗？为什么有效？

21. 给学生纠错的时候，您一般是怎么处理的？是常常直接把正确形式写出来，还是只纠正主要的错误，还是不纠正仅仅是标示出来？

22. 您觉得上面提到的哪种纠错方式最有效？为什么有效？

23. 除了改正错误，你有没有提供给学生其他解决他/她写作问题的办法和方法？

Ⅳ.提供反馈以后：

24. 您觉得把作业发给学生以后，他们会仔细阅读并且学习您的评语吗？

25. 在评改作业的过程中，会不会学生在写作过程中反复犯同样的错误？为什么会反复犯错呢？

26. 一般你会不会布置一些随后的练习给学生以此了解学生会阅读并使用您的评语反馈？集体评价或者和学生单独分析。

27. 从长期来看，您觉得老师的评语对学生提高写作水平有没有积极的意义？

28. 你从何了解学生受益于老师的作文批改？您有没有相应的一个记录来了解每个学生的写作水平提高？

29. 在批改学生写作方面，您觉得遇到的最大挑战或者困惑是什么？

30. 那您有没有尝试一些方法来解决上面的问题？尝试的结果怎么样？

Ⅰ. General background information:
1. What is your native language?

2. What Chinese class are you teaching now?

3. How long have you been teaching Chinese?

4. What is the Chinese language proficiency of your students?

5. What is the writing objective you set for your students?

Ⅱ. General questions about feedback:
6. How many writing assignments have you given this semester?

7. In your opinion, what is the primary goal of providing feedback on students' writing?

8. Do you give feedback for every writing assignment?

9. In what stage of the writing process, do you offer students feedback?

10. Besides teacher feedback, do you use other means of feedback such as peer feedback and student self-editing in your class? If not, have you tried any of them before and why did you stop using them?

11. Besides written feedback, do you give other forms of teacher feedback such as oral feedback, online feedback, etc, to your students?

12. Do you provide students a grading rubric along with their writing tasks? Do you give them the same rubric or different rubrics for different writing tasks?

13. Do you think students are aware of the focus you are looking for in their writing?

Ⅲ. Detailed information of written feedback:
14. How long does it usually take to finish grading students writing assignments?

15. Do you think the investment of time and energy you spend grading writing is worthwhile?

16. What language do you use for your written feedback? Mostly in Chinese/ English? Why?

17. Are there any factors that should be considered when giving feedback to students? Are you aware that the focus of teacher feedback might vary depending on factors like writing tasks, students' personalities, etc? Do you tailor your feedback according to these variables?

18. Which aspect of writing do you usually provide feedback on? Grammar, organization, ideas or content? Why?

19. What kind of feedback do you often give to your students? For example, error correction, ask questions, essay-end summary, grade, etc.

20. Which kind of feedback in question 19 do you think is the most helpful and effective? And why?

21. How do you address students writing errors? For example, correct all the errors directly; only correct the most serious error; no correction but indicate errors by underlining, circling or coding, etc.

22. Which kind of error correction in question 21 do you think is the most helpful and effective? And why？

23. Besides error correction, what other suggestions or strategies do you give students to tackle his/her problem in writing?

Ⅳ. After students have received feedback:
24. Do you think students read and use your feedback after you return assignments to them?

25. Do students repeatedly make certain mistakes in their writing throughout the semester? Can you give an example? What do you think of this?

26. Do you give students any follow-up activities to improve based on your feedback?

27. In the long run, do you think students benefit from your feedback?

28. How do you know teacher feedback contributes to students' writing improvement? Do you keep any record of their writing development?

29. What is the biggest challenge you are faced with in providing students with writing feedback?

30. Have you taken any actions to address this problem?

APPENDIX C

HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 1/30/2011

Learner: Madeline Spring (username: madelinespring)
Institution: Arizona State University
Contact Information Arizona State University
Department: SILC
Email: mkspring@asu.edu
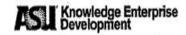**Group 2 Social & Behavioral Research Investigators and key personnel:**

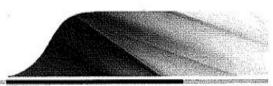### Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 01/30/11 (Ref # 5541913)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Introduction	01/29/11	no quiz
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	01/29/11	3/4 (75%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	01/29/11	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	01/29/11	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	01/29/11	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	01/29/11	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	01/29/11	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBR	01/29/11	3/4 (75%)
Research with Children - SBR	01/29/11	4/4 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	01/29/11	4/4 (100%)
International Research - SBR	01/29/11	3/3 (100%)
Internet Research - SBR	01/29/11	4/4 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections	01/29/11	9/11 (82%)
Workers as Research Subjects-A Vulnerable Population	01/30/11	3/4 (75%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	01/30/11	2/2 (100%)
Arizona State University	01/30/11	no quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTINAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Madeline Spring
	DURHAM LAN
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair
	Soc Beh IRB
Date:	11/04/2011
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	11/04/2011
IRB Protocol #:	1111007048
Study Title:	What are CFL Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Reactions to Writing Feedback

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.