

# A Case Study of The Feedback on Academic Writing of EFL English Major Students in The Saudi University Context

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of the feedback process in the academic writing syllabus of an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context at a recently established University 'Prince University' in Saudi Arabia; including how it is provided by teachers, experienced by students, and perceived by both groups. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a constructivist interpretive stance was adopted by employing an instrumental case study design to gain a holistic insight and develop a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of feedback practice in the abovementioned context. In total, two instruments were used to generate data for the current study. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two EFL writing teachers, and six EFL English major students in their third and fourth year. Second, 19 samples of written coursework were collected and analysed over one semester. Interviews were used to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions, experiences and perspectives on the issues related to feedback, and enhancing and clarifying the feedback used in the written coursework. Students' coursework was a major source of data in itself as well as being a stimulus to capture students' preferences and perspectives on the feedback provided by their teachers. Data generated from the Interviews were analysed thematically while students' coursework were analysed by using a coding scheme which was developed based on Ferris et al. (1997) and Ellis (2008).

The findings of this interpretive study reveal a complex picture of the process of giving feedback in this context. The responsibility for feedback provision rests exclusively with teachers and the peer feedback model is not used. Several contextual factors were identified as affecting EFL writing teachers' beliefs and

practice which are: a large class size, a lack of department policy and feedback guidelines, and assessment types. The findings also revealed that EFL students experienced challenges in understanding teachers' written feedback due to the lack of engagement in the process of feedback and neglecting student-teacher dialogue. Two different responses were found in student interviews regarding the feedback provided: emotional and critical responses. The thesis concludes by highlighting the need for creating feedback guidelines and training courses for EFL writing teachers. It also concludes by suggesting a model of providing feedback and significant recommendations to improve the policy and practice of the process of feedback at Prince University.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is proudly dedicated to...all my beloved family.

To my father, Hassan Alamri, a shining example of pride and consistent support ...

To my mother, Zinah Alshehri, the epitome of patience and sincerity...

To my husband Dr Faisal Alamri,

whose love and unstinted support, always standing by me, is the partner of my  
success ...

To my brothers and sisters, the source of my happiness...

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	12
List of Figures.....	13
List of Abbreviations.....	15
<b>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>16</b>
1.1 Overview of The Topic.....	16
1.2 Nature of The Problem.....	17
1.3 The Study Rationale.....	19
1.4 Significance of The Study and Contribution to Knowledge.....	22
1.5 Aim and Research Questions.....	23
1.6 The Organisation of The Thesis.....	24
<b>CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Overview.....	25
2.2 History of English Language Teaching and Learning in Saudi Arabia.....	26
2.3 Academic Education Levels in The Saudi Context.....	30
2.3.1 School Levels.....	31
2.3.2 Higher Education.....	32
2.4 The Role of the English Language in Saudi Universities.....	33
2.5 English Language at Prince University.....	34
<b>CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>52</b>
3.1 Overview.....	52
3.2 Historical Background to Approaches to The Teaching of Writing.....	53
3.2.1 The Product Approach.....	56
3.2.2 The Writing Process Approach.....	58
3.2.3 The Genre Approach.....	62
3.2.4 The Process-Genre Approach.....	63
3.3 Feedback in Second/Foreign Language Writing.....	64
3.3.1 Written Corrective Feedback.....	65
3.3.2 Oral Feedback.....	71
3.3.3 Peer Feedback.....	72
3.3.4 Computer-Meditated Feedback.....	78
3.3.5 Students' Engagement with Feedback.....	79
3.4 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.....	82
3.5 Theoretical Standpoints of SLA on Corrective Feedback.....	84
3.5.1 Interaction Hypothesis.....	86
3.5.2 Output Hypothesis.....	87

3.5.3	Noticing Hypothesis .....	87
3.5.4	Socio-Cultural Theory .....	88
3.6	Empirical Evidence on Feedback in Writing .....	91
3.6.1	The Effectiveness of Different Types of Feedback in Different Contexts .....	92
3.6.2	Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Regarding Feedback in Students' Writing ..	98
3.6.3	Students' Experiences of Feedback in English Writing .....	107
3.6.3.1	Studies of Students' Preferences of Feedback on Writing .....	107
3.6.3.2	Students' Responses to Teachers' Feedback.....	112
3.6.4	Studies Comparing Students' and Teachers' Preferences and Beliefs about WCF	114
3.7	Conclusion .....	116
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>120</b>
4.1	Overview .....	120
4.2	Research Framework.....	120
4.2.1	Paradigm in Educational Research .....	121
4.2.2	Theoretical Assumptions.....	125
4.2.2.1	Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions .....	125
4.2.3	Methodology.....	128
4.2.3.1	Case Study Design.....	130
4.3	Participants and Recruitment Strategies.....	134
4.3.1	EFL University Students.....	135
4.3.2	EFL Writing Teachers .....	137
4.4	Data Collection Methods.....	138
4.4.1	Interviews.....	138
4.4.1.1	Semi-structured interview with students.....	142
4.4.1.2	Semi-structured interview with teachers .....	142
4.4.2	Students' Written Coursework.....	143
4.5	Data Collection Procedures.....	144
4.5.1	Process of Inviting Participants and Data Collection .....	144
4.5.2	Interview Protocol with Students and Teachers .....	146
4.5.3	My Role as a Reflexive Researcher .....	150
4.6	Data Analysis.....	155
4.6.1	Thematic Analysis .....	155
4.6.2	Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews .....	156
4.6.3	Coding Students' Written Coursework .....	161
4.7	The Quality of The Research.....	163

4.8	Ethical Considerations .....	166
4.8.1	Steps of Conducting Ethical Considerations .....	166
4.9	Challenges and Limitations .....	169
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS.....</b>		<b>171</b>
5.1	Overview .....	171
5.2	The Process of Giving Feedback to EFL students .....	173
5.2.1	Teachers' Practice of Teaching Writing .....	173
5.2.1.1	Writing Classroom Activities.....	174
5.2.1.2	Coursework Expectations.....	178
5.2.1.3	Marking Practices .....	181
5.2.2	How Teachers Provide Feedback.....	185
5.2.2.1	The Overall Strategy Used When Responding to Students' Coursework 185	
5.2.2.2	Types of Written Feedback .....	187
5.2.2.3	Feedback Focus.....	190
5.3	Teachers' Understanding of Feedback and Beliefs Concerning Giving Feedback on Students' Coursework.....	200
5.3.1	Responsibility for Feedback Provision Rests Exclusively with Teachers .....	201
5.3.2	The Focus of Feedback.....	202
5.3.3	The Importance of Marking Students' Coursework to Encourage Attention to Feedback.....	203
5.3.4	Feedback Preferences.....	205
5.3.4.1	Teacher-Student Conferencing (Oral Feedback).....	205
5.3.4.2	Written Feedback.....	207
5.3.4.3	Peer Feedback.....	208
5.4	Factors Influencing Teachers' Process of Giving Feedback.....	209
5.4.1	Contextual Factors .....	210
5.4.1.1	Large Class Sizes and Time Constraints.....	211
5.4.1.2	Lack of Departmental Policies and Guidelines.....	212
5.4.1.3	Assessment Model .....	213
5.4.2	Types of Students' Written Errors .....	216
5.4.3	Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students .....	218
5.4.3.1	Students' Competence.....	218
5.4.3.2	Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students' Responses.....	219
5.5	Students' Expectations of Teacher's Feedback.....	221
5.5.1	The Preferences and Attitudes of Students Towards the Different Feedback Types	222

5.5.2	Students' Preferences Concerning Feedback Focus .....	227
5.5.3	Types of Errors and Students' Expectations .....	228
5.6	Students' Experiences of Teachers' Feedback.....	230
5.6.1	Difficulties of Dealing with The Feedback Provided.....	231
5.6.1.1	Lack of Understanding .....	232
5.6.1.2	Uncertainty.....	234
5.6.1.3	Misapprehension.....	236
5.6.2	Lack of Communication and Neglecting Student-Teacher Dialogue.....	238
5.6.2.1	Lack Of Engagement in Feedback Process .....	238
5.6.2.2	Neglecting Student-Teacher Dialogue.....	241
5.6.3	Students' Responses to Feedback.....	242
5.6.3.1	Emotional Response .....	243
5.6.3.2	Critical Response.....	246
5.7	Summary.....	251
<b>CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION.....</b>		<b>255</b>
6.1	Overview .....	255
6.2	Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Regarding Feedback Provision in the EFL Context of a Recently Established Saudi University.....	255
6.2.1	Responsibility for Feedback Provision Rests with Teachers .....	256
6.2.2	Written Feedback Is Provided on the Final Product.....	259
6.2.3	Conflicting Views on Direct or Indirect Feedback.....	260
6.2.4	Feedback Focus .....	264
6.2.5	The Overall Strategy Used When Responding to Students' Coursework ....	266
6.3	Students' Feedback Preference .....	269
6.3.1	Feedback Sources and Types.....	270
6.3.2	Type of Written Corrective Feedback.....	273
6.3.3	Focus of written Feedback.....	275
6.3.4	Strategies of Error Correction.....	276
6.4	Students' Experience of Teachers' Feedback.....	277
6.4.1	Difficulties Encountered by Students in Understanding Teachers' Feedback 278	
6.4.2	Students' Responses to Feedback.....	283
6.4.2.1	Emotional Responses .....	283
6.4.2.2	Critical Responses.....	285
6.5	Summary.....	289
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION.....</b>		<b>290</b>

7.1	Overview .....	290
7.2	Summary of the Study and its Key Findings.....	290
7.3	Implications and Recommendations.....	293
7.3.1	Feedback Policies and Guidelines.....	293
7.3.2	Teacher Training in Prince University .....	295
7.3.3	Recommendations for EFL Writing Teachers .....	296
7.4	Research Contribution .....	308
7.5	Study Limitations and Future Research .....	311
7.6	Reflection on my PhD Journey .....	315
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>		<b>317</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>		<b>336</b>
	Appendix 1 .....	336
	Appendix 2 .....	341
	Appendix 3 .....	344
	Appendix 4 .....	346
	Appendix 5 .....	347
	Appendix 6 .....	348
	Appendix 7 .....	353
	Appendix 8 .....	363
	Appendix 9 .....	368
	Appendix 10 .....	369
	Appendix 11 .....	370
	Appendix 12 .....	374

## List of Tables

Table 2-1: University Entrance Criteria.....	33
Table 2-2: The contents and objectives of writing modules used in Prince University.....	36
Table 3-1: Written corrective feedback strategies and description.....	65
Table 3-2: Examples of direct feedback .....	67
Table 3-3: Examples of indirect feedback .....	67
Table 3-4: Coding feedback .....	68
Table 3-5: Categories for comments Analysis, adapted from Ferris et al. (1997).....	69
Table 3-6: Description of teachers' written feedback.....	70
Table 3-7: The effectiveness of direct and indirect feedback.....	96
Table 3-8: Studies relating to teachers' beliefs and practice.....	99
Table 4-1: Students' profile .....	135
Table 4-2: Translated version of the marking criteria shown in Figure 4-3 .....	136
Table 4-3: Teacher information .....	137
Table 4-4: Sample of generating initial codes.....	158
Table 4-5: Sample of generating themes .....	159
Table 4-6: Types of feedback focus, developed from Ferris et. al. (1997); Tribble (1996) .....	162
Table 5-1: Research questions, themes, and datasets.....	172
Table 5-2: The process of giving feedback .....	173
Table 5-3: Coursework expectations for years Three and Four .....	180
Table 5-4: Module Assessment .....	184
Table 5-5: Types of feedback used by teachers. Feedback examples for teachers Sara and Noor are indicated in underline and italic font, respectively.....	188
Table 5-6 Quantitative Overview of Teachers' WCF .....	189
Table 5-7: The focus of teachers' feedback.....	191
Table 5-8: Students' preference regarding different types of written feedback .....	223
Table 5-9: Students' attitude towards peer feedback .....	224
Table 5-10: Students' attitude towards oral feedback .....	226
Table 5-11: Students' responses to the aspects on which they preferred their teachers to focus.....	227
Table 5-12: Students' expectations of teachers' feedback focus .....	229
Table 5-13: Difficulties explored with Year Three .....	232
Table 5-14: Difficulties explored with Year Four.....	233
Table 5-15: Uncertainty of understanding feedback in Year Three.....	234
Table 5-16: Uncertainty of understanding feedback in Year Four.....	235
Table 7-1: Feedback Guideline .....	295



## List of Figures

Figure 2-1: Timeline for the development of the English language in the KSA.....	27
Figure 2-2: Sheet for teachers to follow (A) .....	39
Figure 2-3: Sheet for teachers to follow (B) .....	40
Figure 2-4: Sheet for teachers to follow (C) .....	41
Figure 2-5: Sheet for teachers to follow (D) .....	42
Figure 2-6: Student outline template (A).....	43
Figure 2-7: Student outline template (B).....	44
Figure 2-8: Peer editor’s worksheet (A).....	45
Figure 2-9: Peer editor’s worksheet (B).....	46
Figure 2-10: Editor’s checklist.....	47
Figure 2-11: Assignment rubrics.....	48
Figure 3-1: Writing Process Approach, adopted from Curry (1996, cited in Curry and Hewings, 2003:34) .....	59
Figure 4-1: Research framework, adapted from Creswell (2014).....	121
Figure 4-2: The data sets used in the current case study.....	132
Figure 4-3: Marking criteria taken from the website of Prince University .....	136
Figure 4-4: Data collection procedure for each year .....	146
Figure 5-1: Sara’s feedback on the organisation of the coursework.....	186
Figure 5-2: Sara’s feedback related to grammatical errors .....	192
Figure 5-3: Sara’s Feedback related to tense errors .....	192
Figure 5-4: Noor’s feedback practices .....	193
Figure 5-5: Sara’s feedback on organisation .....	194
Figure 5-6: Noor’s feedback on the use of topic sentences .....	194
Figure 5-7: Noor’s feedback on the format of the coursework .....	195
Figure 5-8: Sara’s feedback on an unclear idea.....	196
Figure 5-9: Noor’s feedback concerning an unclear idea .....	196
Figure 5-10: Sara’s feedback on content.....	197
Figure 5-11: Sara’s feedback on mechanical errors.....	198
Figure 5-12: Noor’s feedback on mechanical errors.....	198
Figure 5-13: Teachers’ beliefs about giving feedback.....	201
Figure 5-14: Factors influencing teachers’ process of giving feedback.....	210
Figure 5-15: Sara’s final examination paper (Year Three).....	214
Figure 5-16: Noor’s final examination paper (Year Four).....	214
Figure 5-17: Example of WCF on form and organisation by Noor .....	216
Figure 5-18: Example of WCF on form and content by Sara .....	217
Figure 5-19: Inductive themes concerning feedback.....	222
Figure 5-20: Types of students’ difficulties .....	231
Figure 5-21: Lina’s first draft.....	237
Figure 5-22: Lina’s second draft .....	237
Figure 5-23: Maha’s descriptive essay .....	239
Figure 5-24: Types of student responses to feedback .....	243
Figure 5-25: Teacher indirect feedback affected Jodi emotionally .....	244
Figure 5-26: A comment Jodi found beneficial .....	244
Figure 5-27: A comment given to Asma .....	245

Figure 5-28: Comments criticised by Jodi .....	247
Figure 5-29: Comments criticised by Kloud .....	248
Figure 5-30: Example of Noor's feedback on Hana's coursework .....	249
Figure 5-31: Sara's feedback for Lina which led to a request for oral feedback .....	250
Figure 7-1: Suggested Model for providing feedback.....	299

## List of Abbreviations

<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>CF</b>	Corrective Feedback
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>GAT</b>	General Aptitude Test
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>KSA</b>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>SAAT</b>	Scholastic Achievement Admission Test
<b>SCT</b>	Socio-Cultural Theory
<b>SLA</b>	Second Language Acquisition
<b>TEFL</b>	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
<b>WCF</b>	Written Corrective Feedback

# CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 Overview of The Topic

The ability to write appropriately and effectively is challenging, both in a mother tongue and in a foreign language, regardless of the length of time devoted to the development of these skills as noted by most writing scholars such as Kroll (2003), and Tribble (1996). Writing is important in personal settings, being required for recording information, reporting news, and completing e-mails, as well as texting, and other forms of rapid, digital communication. It also plays a critical role in academic settings, with Graham and Hebert (2010) viewing it as a vehicle for increasing a student's understanding of a topic. Therefore, learning to write in an academic manner requires students gain mastery of the concepts and content of the subject area, as well as developing an ability to express themselves effectively and appropriately in the second or foreign language.

The teaching of writing has been a central element of education systems for a considerable period of time. One of the most important aspects of such teaching is that of feedback, which enables students to develop language accuracy and understand how to state their ideas in a clearer and more accurate manner (Aridah, 2003). Such feedback can take the form of a teacher's written commentary, error correction, teacher-student conference, or peer feedback (Ferris, 2003), and is viewed as a central aspect of both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing programmes across the world (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). The importance of feedback is acknowledged in process-based classrooms, where it forms a key element of students' growing control over the composition of their written work by means of multiple drafts, in order to develop the capacity for effective self-expression.

## 1.2 Nature of The Problem

Within the EFL educational context, and in particular that of Saudi Arabia, written English remains a challenging and complex task, with EFL university teachers highlighting their students' lack of writing skills, i.e. difficulties in organising ideas alongside a poor grasp of vocabulary (Al-Mansour, 2015). In addition, students also tend to experience difficulties in discussing ideas with their classmates when they are asked to work in pairs, difficulties with grammar competence, difficulties with the different structure of Arabic and English, and difficulties in difference between genres (Ankawi, 2020). Furthermore, Saudi EFL university students have acknowledged their own inability to write effectively (Al-Mansour, 2015). Although English has been taught as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia since 1937, proficiency has, particularly over the previous five years, remained at a very low level (Education First-English Proficiency Index, 2019). Most schools and universities in Saudi Arabia are 'teacher-centred' and have an examination-oriented teaching culture (Ankawi, 2020:130), resulting in a product-oriented educational system that has influenced the teaching of many language skills, and in particular writing. The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) has, over the previous five years, invested in developing its English language curriculum to prepare Saudi students for participation in both the job market, and the world economy. This is particularly important as the ability to speak and write in English is viewed as an asset in terms of career opportunities within Saudi Arabia, with one of the pillars of the Kingdom's 2030 vision being a determination to become a centre of global investment. This led Mukhallafi (2019) to consider the enhancement of English language competence as one of the most significant factors in accomplishing this objective.

Higher education institutions (i.e. universities) consider the acquisition of English language skills, especially writing, as crucial, with students required to demonstrate correct use of the language (i.e. linguistic knowledge) alongside adequate knowledge of their subject matter (i.e. disciplinary knowledge). However, Al Badi (2015) identified that most Saudi students struggle to compose texts in English in an independent manner, considering writing as one of the most difficult skills they are required to master. This has been determined as arising from: first, inexperienced teachers; second, inadequate teaching materials; third, an uncondusive schooling environment; and finally, a lack of feedback (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrabai, 2016).

Scholars of EFL and ESL writing such as Sommers (1982) and Ferris (2003) considered feedback one of the most effective tools for enhancing students' writing competence. Feedback is also seen as an essential means of building interaction within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, particularly for individuals working within the interactionist framework (Ellis, 2009). Furthermore, Hyland and Hyland (2006) viewed feedback an important tool for guiding students throughout different stages of the process-based approach (i.e. peer feedback and teacher-student conferencing), in order to ensure an appropriate outcome for students' written texts.

A number of second language writing researchers have undertaken studies investigating various issues related to feedback, with significant attention being dedicated to the examination of its efficacy, due to this being viewed as the main component in developing writing accuracy. In addition, second language writing researchers have also explored many associated issues, including: first, students' reactions to written feedback (e.g. Leki, 1991; Hamouda, 2011), and second, the

relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in their writing classrooms (e.g. Ferris, 2014; Junqueira and Payant, 2015). Researchers have also made a comparison between students' preferences and teachers' practices (e.g. Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Lee, 2004), highlighting the need for additional studies to focus on differing contexts, students, and teachers. Although various studies (e.g. Alharbi, 2020) have been undertaken in the context of Saudi Arabia concerning the benefits of teachers' feedback for the proficiency of students' written work, little attention has yet been paid to examining teachers' understanding of the process of feedback alongside the experience of their students.

The above has therefore been identified as the problem statement for the current research. The following sections introduce; first, the rationale for the study; second, its theoretical and practical significance; and third, the aspects explored by the current researcher. This study offers evidence concerning the process of giving feedback in an EFL university context, as well as teachers' beliefs and understanding of feedback on students' writing, and students' expectations and experience of feedback in the context of a specific Saudi university (anonymised in this work as Prince University). This research will therefore contribute to the field of teaching and learning English language, as illustrated in detail in the following sections.

### **1.3 The Study Rationale**

Teachers' instructional practices tend to be shaped by their personal beliefs concerning the teaching and learning of languages (Richardson et al., 1991; Johnson, 1992; Woods, 1996; Gebel and Schrier, 2002). Although there have been a considerable number of attempts to understand these beliefs and practices in relation to a first language, there remain limited studies exploring teachers' beliefs

in the EFL university context (Borg, 2006), and particularly in relation to universities in Saudi Arabia (Alkhatib, 2015).

Although such studies examine teachers' beliefs, they generally report their findings as being elicited from a specific type of participant (i.e. either teachers or students), and thus fail to give the full picture of the process of giving feedback. Therefore, this current study examines the process of feedback from the point of view of both EFL teacher and student, including teachers' beliefs and practices and students' expectations and experiences. As a result, this study provides new insights into this phenomena, including a clear understanding of the related issues, leading to: first, suggestions of methods of identifying their causes; second, an improved understanding of the issue to benefit the development of training courses and/or designing English writing teaching models; and finally, an exploration of the gap between students' expectations and preferences and teachers' practice and perceptions of students' needs. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), feedback is generally studied as an isolated phenomenon where there are various related factors that are neglected; however this current study explores all of the related factors. This is undertaken by first, interviewing teachers and analysing written feedback on written coursework, in order to explore the teachers' beliefs and practices, and second, undertaking multiple interviews with students to establish a more accurate picture of the engagement between teachers and students during the process of receiving feedback.

In addition, Alshahrani and Storch (2014) noted the failure to provide Saudi university teachers with sufficient institutional guidelines, along with training and development courses regarding feedback. This current study therefore examines



teachers' practices with a view to suggesting suitable recommendations for EFL writing teachers, supported by an exploration of the experience of their students.

Furthermore, the product approach is considered the dominant approach in teaching writing in Saudi contexts (Ankawi, 2020), and to have a negative impact on engagement between teachers and students and to lack effective interaction concerning feedback. Therefore, after exploring and fully understanding feedback processes, this study suggests a model which is feasible for teachers, instructors, and students as well in EFL university contexts.

The impetus to conduct this current study, investigating the process of giving feedback, emanated from my own experience as both an EFL and ESL student in higher education. My bachelor's degree in EFL, and two years' teaching experience with young learners, led me to wish to learn about other approaches to the teaching of English skills to young learners. My academic journey started by being accepted onto the Master's course in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in the School of Education at the University of Exeter. The year I spent studying for my master's degree taught me a considerable amount about teaching methodology. However, I also experienced a number of challenges related to academic writing. I found that the different types of feedback provided by each faculty identified one way of tackling these challenges, particularly when it came to formative feedback. This experience therefore helped me to consider in depth my own educational background, i.e. in relation to a recently established university in Saudi Arabia. This prompted me to undertake educational research focusing on this context, exploring the teaching of writing and the process of giving feedback. As noted above, these aspects formed the primary motivation for my research into feedback processes within the context of EFL writing.

## 1.4 Significance of The Study and Contribution to Knowledge

Prior to commencing this study, I established that there has been little previous research empirically examining the process of giving feedback in the KSA directed by EFL teachers and received by English major university students, including establishing the beliefs held by teachers and students' expectations and experience. Thus, the significance of the current study lies in the originality of its contribution to several areas of knowledge. Moreover, previous studies have highlighted the need for further research into the issue of feedback on students' writing in the Saudi EFL context (Alshahrani and Storch, 2014; Mahfoodh, 2017). Therefore, this study offers a valuable contribution to an improved understanding of the situation within a Saudi EFL educational institution. The study also makes a practical contribution to enhancing the awareness of feedback practices at 'Prince University' in the context of the KSA, through a case study focussed on the issue of feedback, followed by the development of recommendations. Moreover, the few available studies focussing on the beliefs and practices relating to feedback on writing have tended to focus on a single type of feedback, i.e. either written or peer feedback such as Alkhatib (2015). The in-depth analysis of students' expectations and experience not only provides a detailed picture of reception of teachers' written feedback, but also contributes to recommendations of methods to administrators related to their practical implementation.

The current constructivist design employs three sources in its investigation of the feedback process: first, teachers; second, students; and third, written feedback on students' written coursework. This therefore offers new and holistic insights into the process of feedback. This study provides a greater understanding of the views and reflections of both EFL Saudi teachers and students, as well as

how their responses influence teachers' instructional practices. This can also help in developing improved support for English language departments and teachers, particularly in terms of training and development. The main research questions and objectives are outlined in the section below.

## **1.5 Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of this study is to explore the complete feedback process at Prince University. This includes an investigation into the actual practices of writing teachers when it comes to the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing texts through: firstly, collecting students' written essays; secondly, understanding Prince University teachers' approach to feedback; and thirdly, investigating the factors behind this practice. This study also aims to understand the expectations and preferences of students concerning the feedback practices they find most effective, and to compare the conclusions with their actual experience of their teachers' practices. In addition, it explores the impact of the related contextual, institutional, situational factors concerning Prince University.

This study therefore focuses on answering the following four main questions:

- 1- What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at Prince University?
- 2- What is the understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?
- 3- What are the EFL students' expectations of their teachers' feedback?
- 4- What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?

## 1.6 The Organisation of The Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The introductory Chapter, the present one, introduces the background of the study, and explains the rationale, objectives, and research questions of the study. Chapter two explains the Saudi EFL university context in detail. Chapter three is divided into the following; first, historical background to approaches of teaching writing; second, feedback in second and foreign language writing; third, a theoretical standpoint on errors and feedback; finally, the empirical evidence on the feedback issues in ESL and EFL contexts. Chapter four presents the research methodology of the study. It clarifies the research framework of this study, explains the approach used in this study (i.e. qualitative approach) and presents the different instruments employed to collect the data (i.e. interviews and students' written coursework). This chapter then moves on to explain the participants' profile and the recruitment process. Finally, it illustrates how the obtained data was validated and analysed and discusses the ethical issues related to the study. Chapter five presents the findings of the qualitative data of the study. Chapter six discusses the key findings and relates them to previous studies. Chapter seven provides implications and recommendations for educational institutions and concludes the study by providing suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Overview

The background of the Saudi educational context is presented in this section. Specifically, first, the history of introducing the English language in Saudi education is explained, followed by how the teaching objectives have changed. An overview of the education system in Saudi Arabia is provided. Second, Saudi educational stages are discussed including schools and universities with a focus on teaching and learning the English language, assessment, and requirements of English major entry in order to better understand the place of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Saudi Arabia. Finally, detail about the setting (Prince University) where the study was conducted in, are presented. Information about the chosen context will be discussed in depth. A contextual understanding is based on my personal knowledge and learning experience as there is a lack of public information, as I was a student at this university from 2009-2012. Further information was collected before and during the data collection following visits to the department of English language in the chosen university. Thus, detailed information was collected from the English language department to give a summary of the different kinds of employment graduates of this context are being prepared for. This chapter concludes with an insight into the Saudi 2030 vision and how the role of this vision will help in improving the Saudi educational system in general and in teaching and learning English in particular.

## **2.2 History of English Language Teaching and Learning in Saudi Arabia.**

It is difficult to analyse EFL in the Saudi education context without critically examining how English is taught and practised in each classroom at each educational level. That is because the number of studies that evaluate education policy in the Saudi context is very limited due to the fast and constant changes in Saudi educational policy (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). English as a subject has received a lot of attention from the Saudi Ministry of Education as well as from the Saudi community. English education in the Kingdom has undergone several changes and modifications. The Saudi TEFL curriculum was prepared by the department of English in the Directorate of the curriculum under the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1999, specifying the goals of teaching basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading & writing) to communicate with English-speaking people (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

According to Al-Hajailan (2003), during the history of Teaching English in the Kingdom, two curriculum documents were prepared to specify the aims and objectives for TEFL. The first document was made in 1408H (1987) and became the basis for all TEFL textbooks. The new books employed the latest method of teaching “the communicative method” (Al-Hajailan, 2003). The second document for TEFL was made and “modified by the department of English in the Directorate of the curriculum under the Ministry of Education in 1421H (2000)” (Al-Hajailan, 2003). According to Saudi Arabian education policy, the essential ideas of education are as follows: “Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them to acquire knowledge and

sciences from other communities” to participate in the service of education (Al-Hajailan, 2003:23).

In the context of the Saudi educational system, currently, the ministry of education (MoE) is in control of all levels of education in the KSA (i.e. both schooling and higher education). Before 2016, the MoE was divided into two separate entities. The first one was called the ministry of education, which focused on all schools, whereas the second one was called the ministry of higher education, which solely focused on higher education (i.e. universities). Figure 2-1 below summarises the history of English language teaching in the KSA.

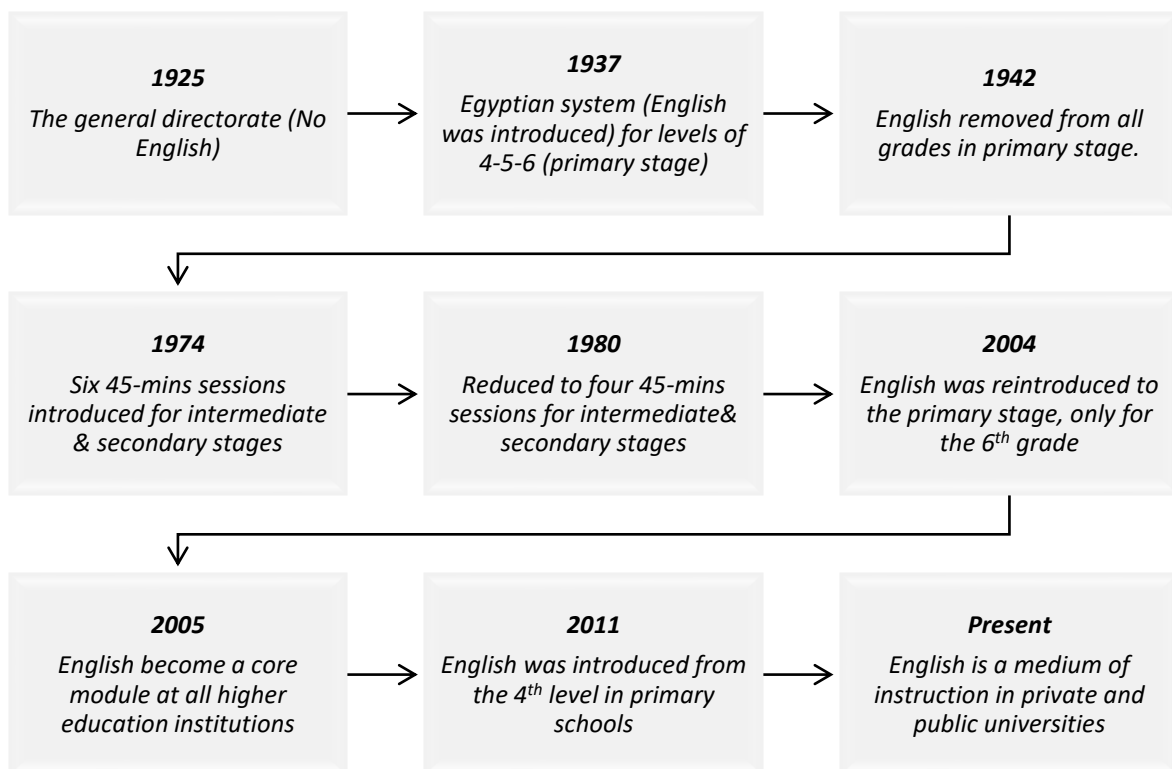


Figure 2-1: Timeline for the development of the English language in the KSA

At the time of the establishment of the educational system in Saudi education in 1925 the only focus was on Islamic law, Arabic culture, and traditions. At that time, students were required to study for three years in preparatory school and

moved onto four years of elementary school. After seven years of studying, students were qualified to work in any governmental/private sector (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). The Arabic language was the medium of instruction in all public schools (i.e. schools fully controlled by the MoE are referred to as public schools, where private schools refer to ones owned by individuals although controlled by MoE regarding schools' regulation). The educational system at that time was "cloned of the education system of Egypt" (Barnawi& Al-Hawsawi, 2017:202). Egypt was considered to be a more advanced country than that of Saudi as claimed by Habbash (2011:33). Historically, Egypt's institutions including the education system had been heavily influenced by the French, following Napoleonic rule, therefore qualified teachers were recruited from Egypt to teach at this school, however, Islamic subjects remained under the control of the Saudi Arabian Education Ministry (Elyas and Picard, 2019)

In 1937, English as a foreign language (EFL) was introduced to the Saudi educational system. It was taught from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade (primary level), four times a week, where each session was 45 minutes. English teachers were from different Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria and Jordan, due to the shortage of qualified Saudi English teachers. In 1942, the General Directorate of Education was renamed The Ministry of Education. It was then given the responsibility for the entire Saudi educational system (both public and private schools). It had control of policymaking for all levels of schooling in both sectors. Two major changes regarding restructuring schooling levels and the status of the English language took place at that time (i.e. 1942). The three years of preparatory and four primary years were combined to form a six-year level called primary school. The MoE additionally added three years of middle and another three years of secondary school consisting of two tracks,



Science and Humanities. In other words, compulsory schooling levels changed from only six years to 12 years (6 levels in primary schools, 3 in both middle and secondary schools).

In terms of the changes in the English language, the English language as a subject was removed in 1942 from all the primary grades for an unstated reason and reintroduced to the middle and secondary schools, as claimed by Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi (2017). Arguably, that was to enable students to learn Arabic more in-depth and prevent any incorrect use of the Arabic language. The MoE, moreover, added two more English classes (a total of six sessions per week) for both levels (i.e. middle and secondary). In 1980, the MoE, however, removed the additional two classes, reducing them to only four sessions per week, for an unknown reason as well. Since then, the number of sessions has not changed.

There are various global and local factors, such as the 9/11 attacks, the Arab Spring, the global financial crisis of 2008 and oil prices that are seen to have some impact on the changes that occurred in the English language policy in the Saudi educational system.

For example, in 2001, before those events took place, according to the curriculum document published that year, the overall objectives of teaching English were as follows: “to allow students to develop their intellectual, personal, and professional abilities, acquire basic language skills. Develop their awareness of the importance of learning the English language to enable them to present and explain Islamic concepts and participating in spreading Islam. Another objective is to enable them, in the future, to present the culture and civilization of their nation” (Faruk, 2014). However, after 2001, the Saudi government experienced international

pressure, particularly from the USA, requesting a reformation of the Saudi curricula including the English language (Habbash, 2011:34). As a result, English language objectives were changed and developed to focus mainly on providing knowledge about foreign cultures to promote “Liberalism” (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017:204).

In 2004, the MoE allocated a budget to reintroduce the English language for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in primary school. A year later, regarding higher education, the MoE introduced a preparatory year, offering an intensive English programme at all higher education institutions. The main purpose of this programme is to improve students’ linguistic and communicative competence. (Refer to Section 2.3.2 for more details about the Saudi higher educational system). In 2011, the MoE introduced another programme, called English education development, which aimed to introduce English as a compulsory subject from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade (primary school). It was introduced to enhance the quality of English education at secondary school levels.

### **2.3 Academic Education Levels in The Saudi Context**

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and managing institutional requirements such as changing policy, improving textbooks, and providing materials (MoE, 2021). Schools in Saudi Arabia run five days a week, Sunday to Thursday. The starting and ending dates for the academic year are the same for all levels (primary, middle, secondary, and higher education) in all regions in the KSA. The academic year consists of two semesters each lasting 18 weeks.

### 2.3.1 School Levels

For the primary stage (1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grades), students have six 45-minute classes a day. From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> grades, pupils start to study new subjects such as English and computing. At the primary stage, pupils do not have any final term written examinations. They are assessed by continuous assessments evaluating students' achievement throughout the year (Alafaleq & Fan, 2014).

Furthermore, for the middle and secondary stages, students have seven classes a day. In the middle stage (7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> grades), unlike the primary stage, students have final examinations. Each subject has two types of assessments, namely, during-term assessment, which includes a mid-term quiz, homework, classroom participation, and a final exam. The during-term assessment accounts for 40% of their total mark, while the final exam accounts for 60%. To pass a unit, students must obtain at least 50% of the total mark.

The secondary level, which consists of three years (10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades), is the last (pre-university) stage in education. When students complete the first grade (i.e. grade 10) of this stage, they choose between two paths: (a) scientific or (b) humanities, to study in their two final years. Students who selected the scientific path study scientific subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, geology, physics, and computers, plus some non-scientific subjects such as Arabic, English, and Islamic studies. The humanities path, on the other hand, focuses on non-scientific subjects such as Arabic studies (e.g., Arabic literature, linguistics, and rhetoric), Islamic studies (e.g., the holy Qur'an and Islamic law), social studies (e.g., history and geography), and English. As in the middle stage, secondary school students undergo two types of assessments: during-term assessment (i.e. attendance, class participation, homework, mid-term quiz) (50%) and a final exam (50%). Students

pass the unit if they achieve at least 50% of the total mark, with 20/50 (40%) or higher on the final exam.

### 2.3.2 Higher Education

According to the Saudi ministry of education, 29 universities in Saudi Arabia offer several majors such as languages, computing, and medicine. Once students complete their secondary school, they are required, if they are planning to undertake undergraduate studies, to pass one or two exams set by the MoE, depending on the students' educational background. These exams are written by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education called Qiyas.

The first test is called the “General Aptitude Test (GAT)” (in Arabic, Qiyas), which “measures the analytical and deductive skills” of a student who has completed secondary school studies (Qiyas, 2020). The second test, also managed by Qiyas, is known as the “Scholastic Achievement Admission Test (SAAT)” that aims to test students on “the general and key concepts in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and English covered in the courses of the three grades of General Secondary Schools” (Qiyas, 2020). Only Science students are required to take both tests, the GAT and SAAT, whereas students from the humanities track are required to only take the GAT. University entry requirements are dependent on secondary school grades plus the scores of the two exams (GAT and SAAT), although this varies from one university to another. The grades (i.e. secondary school, GAT and SAAT) are counted as shown in Table [2-1](#).

Table 2-1: University Entrance Criteria

Background	Weighting		
	Secondary School	GAT	SAAT
Science	30%	30%	40%
Humanities and Social Science	70%	30%	-

The general education system in Saudi Arabia, i.e. the public schools, is centralised and administered by the MoE (Ministry of Education, 2021); however, it has no authority in higher education institutions as each university administers its own curricula and programs. The entry policy of Prince University where I conducted my study, and particularly the English language major entry policy, will be presented in Section 2.5.

## 2.4 The Role of the English Language in Saudi Universities

Regarding the higher education context, each university drafts its own course plans, regulations, and criteria and is responsible for employing its staff. Most Saudi universities use English as the language of instruction in some science courses, such as medicine and engineering (as English is essential and the language of these domains), while Arabic is used in non-scientific courses (e.g., courses of humanities). However, other courses in which English is not the language of instruction require students to complete a compulsory module in all programmes offered by Saudi universities. For example, a student taking a bachelor's degree in history must complete an English Integrated Skills module, as part of their course plan which is equivalent to basic user to independent user B1 in CEFR levels by the time they graduate. The additional English unit is intended to improve students' competence in English and enable them to use the language to access knowledge in addition to Arabic. However, two prominent science universities use English as

the sole language of instruction for all of their courses. These universities are King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (Alamri, 2011). Other Saudi universities, for example, King Abdul-Aziz University, teach the English language in the preparatory year programme (i.e. a year studied before joining a bachelor's program, known as Foundation year in some contexts) for students who aim to become English language majors. Students at the majority of Saudi universities are required to take a preparatory year before starting their bachelor programme. Therefore, English language centres are found in those universities, and their role is to help students transition into an English medium instruction in their faculty (MoE, 2019). Students are required to complete this year and fulfil the minimum requirements (minimum requirements may differ from one university to another) for eligibility to enrol on the four-year bachelor's degree course.

This initial stage aims to improve students' level of English comprehension and spoken abilities. It also aims to further successful independent learning that helps students to move forwards in the field they want to study in. Therefore, it is difficult to present an overall view of all Saudi universities in terms of their use of English because their policy may differ, as such decisions are made by the university. In this section, the English policy of Prince University, which is the context of my study, is described in detail as a recently established public university.

## **2.5 English Language at Prince University**

Prince University (PU) is one of the public universities in the KSA that offers several majors such as English language, computing and medicine. Located in the centre of Saudi Arabia, it is one of the recently established ones. PU university was first a college in 1983, and only became a university in 2010 (PU, 2020). Since the

focus of my research is on students studying an English-major bachelor's degree programme, pertinent information about this programme must be considered. Upon completion of secondary school, students are eligible to apply to PU if they meet the entry requirements (secondary school, GAT and SAAT), as explained above in Section 2.3.2. The minimum entry grades may vary from year to year and from one college to another. For example, in 2019, the minimum score required for an offer of acceptance on the preparatory year course was 85%, which is calculated as described in Section 2.3.2 (PU, 2019). Upon acceptance into the university, students are required to do a preparatory year, which includes a variety of subjects such as Arts, and Sciences. However, at Prince University, students intending to study English language and literature as a major do not need to do the preparatory year; they must score a more or equal to 95% in the combined total of secondary school exams, GAT and SAAT. Students' English proficiency level at this stage is low, equivalent to A1 in CEFR levels. Moreover, there is no specific exam in this university, such as IELTS or TOEFL, to measure students' level in the English language in advance. In other words, for students to enrol on an English language major at Prince University, they must complete their secondary school, and score no less than 95% when their secondary school scores are combined with GAT and/or SAAT (refer to Table 2-1 for more information). According to the Prince University website (2020), the objectives of the English language and literature programme are:

Offering programs in English Language, literature and translation that meet quality assurance and standards. Providing learning opportunities that help students promote their personal and professional skills. Training academically qualified graduates capable of competing in the job market. Encouraging the promotion of scientific research culture. Adopting teaching

strategies that promote motivation and moral conduct, critical and creative thinking. Training generations of graduates qualified in the field of English Language who are capable of developing society. Offering in-service academic and professional training programs for the faculty members.

The English language is the only foreign language taught at this university. The course modules are offered by the university faculty office. As my interest in this context is to explore how students are provided with feedback in their academic writing classes, the contents and objectives of writing modules used in the four years are provided in Table 2-2 to have a clearer picture about the writing modules. The following description is taken from the Prince University website (2019).

Table 2-2: The contents and objectives of writing modules used in Prince University

Writing modules	Content	Objectives
<b>Year One Writing skills</b>	It is an introduction to the general principles of descriptive writing. It provides educational models inspired by the cultural reality of the students and their personal experience, which would help them arrange their ideas in the form of valuable and coherent sentences.	It aims to develop outlining and summarising skills, develop general writing skills with particular reference to spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, layout, etc., and develop the autonomous skill of self-expression
<b>Year Two Writing one</b>	It is designed to promote students' effectiveness in writing skills. It also helps to improve upper-level English writing skills, including compositions, essays, and letter writing. Besides, it is meant to enhance the students' ability to use the language and grammar structure in a more complex fashion. Furthermore, it helps improve students' ability to write a variety of text types and to produce both coherent and cohesive written works.	It aims to get students to produce ideas by individual brainstorming and peer consultation. Objectives of this module are: 1- to make students write under time pressure and peer analysis of errors. 2- To focus on the appropriate use of



		<p>the expression of ideas in writing.</p> <p>3- to ensure the use of appropriate grammar and vocabulary to consolidate writing skills.</p>
<b>Year three Essay Writing-2</b>	<p>It is designed to give students control over their writing and help them write precisely and coherently. It introduces students to critical thinking and the fundamentals of essay writing. The prime purpose is to guide students in refining topics, developing and supporting ideas, investigating, evaluating, and incorporating appropriate resources; editing for effective style and usage; and determining appropriate approaches for various contexts, audiences, and purposes.</p>	<p>It aims to achieve the objectives to comprehend the process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing effective essays. Objectives of this module are:</p> <p>1- to help students compose a precise essay.</p> <p>2- to evaluate and edit essays for grammar, organisation, and content.</p>
<b>Year four Essay Writing-3</b>	<p>It is designed to improve writing effectiveness and help students develop their writing with increased emphasis on critical essays, argumentation, and research. Students will learn to locate, evaluate, integrate, and document sources and effectively edit them for required style and usage</p>	<p>It aims to enable students to generate thought-provoking ideas, organise thoughts logically, and improve writing skills through prewriting, writing, and rewriting processes.</p>

As my focus is on the academic writing in the third and fourth year, I have accessed the books used which are titled “Effective Academic Writing” (by Rhonda Liss and Jason Davis, 2012) used for year three; and “Effective Academic Writing” (by Alice Savage, Patricia Mayer, 2012) used for year four. The books provide step-by-step Instructions that take students through the complete academic writing process starting at the sentence level and ending with the researched essay. The books consist of 6 units, which introduce academic content (refer to Appendix 1 for

more information). The books provide students with guidance on how to start with a low level of competence and end with the desired academic language level. In each semester, the students are taught three units, each session lasting for three hours per week. Regarding the teaching methods, the book includes a sheet for teachers to follow, writing tasks, and directs students through the writing process as highlighted and shown in Figure 2-2 to Figure 2-5.

<b>Tracking Sheet</b>				
<i>Student's name</i>	Outline	Draft 1	Draft 2	Final Comment
Assignment 1				
Assignment 2				
Assignment 3				
Assignment 4				
Assignment 5				
Midterm Comment:				
Final Comment:				

This at-a-glance sheet can be stapled inside a folder that contains the students' writing. It can be used to record grades, note strengths, or simply to keep track of where a student is in the process. It can also be a helpful tool at the beginning of the semester because students can see what will be expected over the course of the class.

You may also find it useful to create a course calendar that details when drafts are due and when you are beginning a new chapter. Sometimes when students are writing multiple drafts, it is difficult to know when to stop. A calendar can help keep everyone on track and ensure that a good number of assignments reach completion.

**The Introductory Unit (Unit 1)**

Each book in the series begins with an introductory unit that reviews skills taught at the previous level and introduces the focus of the new level. This unit is meant to provide a general overview of the writing process and does not take the students through a writing assignment.

**Working through a Unit**

**Writing Process Step 1: Stimulating Ideas**

The purpose of Writing Process Step 1 is to activate students' knowledge around the topic and get them brainstorming ideas. Use the visual that opens the unit to generate ideas and vocabulary. Use the authentic text to point out ways that the text is successful rhetorically. Use the follow-up questions to get students writing sentences that can become models for their own writing.

**Writing Process Step 2: Brainstorming and Outlining**

Writing Process Step 2 introduces the task. The activities that follow provide information, techniques, and practice that support the planning stages for a particular mode of writing.

Figure 2-2: Sheet for teachers to follow (A)

Each unit has a unique graphic organizer to support students in planning their writing as well as exercises to get students thinking about audience and purpose. At the end of Writing Process Step 2, students should have a plan that guides them in writing their first draft.



GO ONLINE

#### Download the Assignment Rubric

Have students download the assignment rubric when you introduce the task. Go over the rubric and make sure they understand the criteria. There are several ways you can use this rubric as you move through the unit:

- Communicate your expectations for their work. Discuss the steps in the process and match the criteria in the rubric with each particular step.
- Help them understand how the rubric applies to particular pieces of writing by using it to evaluate the model of student writing. Practicing with the rubric helps students practice the skills needed for peer editing and self-evaluation.
- Use the rubric to evaluate the students' writing on drafts or the final draft.



GO ONLINE

#### Download the Outline Template

Have students download (or provide copies of) the Outline Template. Instruct students to complete the outline with their own ideas at home or in class. If you are using a tracking sheet like the one shown on page 2, add a comment in the outline column that may be useful to the writer in moving forward.

#### Writing Process Step 3: Developing Your Ideas

In Writing Process Step 3, students write their first draft. Before writing, students read a second model text and complete a series of activities that draw attention to specific language functions. In the model text, elicit/point out ways in which the model successfully fits the assignment specifications.



GO ONLINE

#### Go to the Online Grammar Practice

Direct students to the Online Grammar Practice for additional practice with the Grammar Focus topics. Some students may need more practice than others. The online practice allows students to work individually and focus on the areas where they need the most practice.

Figure 2-3: Sheet for teachers to follow (B)



GO ONLINE

**Download the first Peer Editor's Worksheet**

After students have finished writing a draft, consider facilitating a peer editing session. Have students download (or provide copies of) the Peer Editor's Worksheet for editing a first draft (the first of three peer worksheets for the unit). For optimal results, take a short break between the drafting process and the peer edit. Consider using peer editing during the next class meeting.

Introduce the role of the peer as someone who is not an expert but has value as a reader. First, students exchange papers and read each other's work as readers, not evaluators. Next, instruct them to use the Peer Editor's Questions in the book and take turns giving oral feedback to the writer. Alternatively, have them use the downloaded Peer Editor's Worksheet to give written feedback. This can be done before, after, or instead of the oral session. The worksheet may be particularly useful in helping certain students who are struggling with the underlying structure of a rhetorical mode of writing.

Follow the peer editing process with feedback of your own on the content and organization. At this point, you may also make choices depending on time and purpose:

- You may want to provide points or a grade for the first draft, or you may want to give comments only.
- You may choose to give students an opportunity to revise their draft for organization and clarity before moving onto specific sentence-level editing.
- If you are using a tracking sheet like the one shown on page 2, put a note in the column that will help guide students moving from first to second draft.

**Writing Process Step 4: Editing Your Writing**

In Writing Process Step 4, students edit their first draft, focusing on errors at the sentence level. Use the exercises in the book to draw students' attention to specific grammar points that will improve their writing.



GO ONLINE

**Download the second Peer Editor's Worksheet**

Finally, after the students have used the Editor's Checklist in the book to check their paper, have them use the second Peer Editor's Worksheet (for editing and rewriting) to get a second pair of eyes. Peer editing is not only useful to the writer receiving feedback, but also for the reader who develops editing skills that are helpful in revising one's own work. This second peer editor's worksheet guides students to look carefully at language and how it is used.

The editor's checklist and the second peer editor's worksheet help students refocus for the final draft. The feedback can help students decide what grammar to practice online (see below)

**Figure 2-4: Sheet for teachers to follow (C)**





GO ONLINE

#### Download the first Peer Editor's Worksheet

After students have finished writing a draft, consider facilitating a peer editing session. Have students download (or provide copies of) the Peer Editor's Worksheet for editing a first draft (the first of three peer worksheets for the unit). For optimal results, take a short break between the drafting process and the peer edit. Consider using peer editing during the next class meeting.

Introduce the role of the peer as someone who is not an expert but has value as a reader. First, students exchange papers and read each other's work as readers, not evaluators. Next, instruct them to use the Peer Editor's Questions in the book and take turns giving oral feedback to the writer. Alternatively, have them use the downloaded Peer Editor's Worksheet to give written feedback. This can be done before, after, or instead of the oral session. The worksheet may be particularly useful in helping certain students who are struggling with the underlying structure of a rhetorical mode of writing.

Follow the peer editing process with feedback of your own on the content and organization. At this point, you may also make choices depending on time and purpose:

- You may want to provide points or a grade for the first draft, or you may want to give comments only.
- You may choose to give students an opportunity to revise their draft for organization and clarity before moving onto specific sentence-level editing.
- If you are using a tracking sheet like the one shown on page 2, put a note in the column that will help guide students moving from first to second draft.

#### Writing Process Step 4: Editing Your Writing

In Writing Process Step 4, students edit their first draft, focusing on errors at the sentence level. Use the exercises in the book to draw students' attention to specific grammar points that will improve their writing.



GO ONLINE

#### Download the second Peer Editor's Worksheet

Finally, after the students have used the Editor's Checklist in the book to check their paper, have them use the second Peer Editor's Worksheet (for editing and rewriting) to get a second pair of eyes. Peer editing is not only useful to the writer receiving feedback, but also for the reader who develops editing skills that are helpful in revising one's own work. This second peer editor's worksheet guides students to look carefully at language and how it is used.

The editor's checklist and the second peer editor's worksheet help students refocus for the final draft. The feedback can help students decide what grammar to practice online (see below)

Figure 2-5: Sheet for teachers to follow (D)

As shown in the sheets above, the textbook guides the students through different stages; first, stimulating ideas; second, brainstorming and outlining where students are required to fill in an outline template as shown in Figure 2-6 and Figure 2-7, which is taken from the year four textbook.

Effective Academic Writing 2   Outline Template	
Unit 4: Comparison-Contrast Essays	
Name: _____	
Date: _____	
Title: _____	
Introduction (First Paragraph)	
<p><b>Hook:</b> Interest the reader. (Tip: Tell your expertise in this area.)</p> <p><b>Background:</b> Give general details that are important to your audience.</p> <p><b>Thesis statement:</b> Introduce the two places and tell how you are comparing them.</p>	
Body Paragraphs (Middle)	
<p><b>Topic Sentence:</b> Write a controlling idea that introduces similarities <i>or</i> differences.</p> <p><b>Details:</b> Explain the similarities or differences. Write about the first place. Then write about second place.</p>	
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Figure 2-6: Student outline template (A)



<p><b>Topic Sentence:</b> Write a controlling idea that introduces similarities <i>or</i> differences.</p> <p><b>Details:</b> Explain the similarities or differences. Write about the first place. Then write about the second place.</p>	
<p>Conclusion (Last Paragraph)</p>	
<p><b>Summary:</b> Retell the main similarities and differences.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Explain what you learned from the comparison that is interesting to your audience.</p>	

Figure 2-7: Student outline template (B)



Third, students write a first draft; fourth, students have to submit the draft to a peer to be checked, where students in this stage should fill in the peer editor's worksheet as shown in Figures [Figure 2-8](#) and [Figure 2-9](#).

**Effective Academic Writing 2** | Peer Editor's Worksheet

Unit 2: Descriptive Essays  
Writing Task

Page 42  
Peer Editing a First Draft

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Writer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Peer Editor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your favorite part of the essay?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What details does the writer provide to describe how the food looks, feels, tastes, and smells?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Where does the essay need more details?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the writer's opinion of the food?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Figure 2-8: Peer editor's worksheet (A)



5. Why is the food important to the writer?

---

---

---

6. What questions do you have for the writer?

---

---

---

Figure 2-9: Peer editor's worksheet (B)

Fifth, students edit the draft and use the editor's checklist to check their coursework before the final submission as shown in Figure 2-10.

**Effective Academic Writing 2** | Editor's Checklist

**Unit 4 Online Writing Tutor Assignment:**  
*Write a comparison-contrast essay about two places.*

**Content & Organization:**

- My thesis statement compares two topics.
- Each body paragraph has a clear topic sentence and specific supporting sentences.
- I correctly used connectors to show similarities and differences.

**Language:**

- I correctly used comparatives in my essay.

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Figure 2-10: Editor's checklist

The textbook also includes assignment rubrics to be used by the teacher to assess students' writing after each coursework as shown in Figure 2-11, which is taken from the year three textbook.



Unit 2 Writing Task

Writing Task: We often make comparisons in both our personal and academic lives. We may compare two of our favorite movies with a friend or discuss linguistic differences among various languages in a research seminar. Write an essay for a photography magazine. Compare and contrast two photographs. You may choose the two photographs on page 36 or two photographs of your choice that share common features. Discuss how these photographs are alike or different. Organize your writing by using either block or point-by-point style.

Criteria	Points				
	20	15	10	5	0
The essay effectively responds to the writing task.					
The essay is well organized in either block or point-by-point style.					
The introduction gives background information about the photographs and introduces the points of comparison.					
Body paragraphs compare the two photographs based on common points of comparison.					
The writer uses proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.					

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_ / 100

Figure 2-11: Assignment rubrics

I also visited the English department at Prince University and collected some information from the head of department that is unavailable on the university website. The meeting with the head of department was initially meant to facilitate the access to participants, i.e. teachers and students. During this meeting, she was informed about the project; its aims, methods and how they can help to facilitate the

process of generating the dataset for my study. The head of department was then asked about specific contextual information, such as, feedback, scoring criteria and professional development and training for staff.

First, teachers are required to achieve the objectives of their writing module, but free to apply their preferred teaching methods and assessment of distribution as to how writing is assessed. In addition, teachers have 50% must be on the final exam and the other 50% is for teachers to decide.

Second, regarding the feedback provided to the students, there are no specific criteria for giving feedback as we shall see; the data collected regarding this issue will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5. Feedback on writing differs from one teacher to another. This seems to support what Alshahrani & Storch (2014) report about the universities in Saudi Arabia, which is that there are no guidelines on written corrective feedback. Moreover, although the book is designed for certain teaching methods, teachers can use their preferred teaching methods; thus, they are free to make their own choice of teaching methods, and I would therefore call them the main decision-maker.

Third, each module is taught over 14 weeks, followed by an achievement examination. The design of the examination, its administration and grading are all done by the course instructors. However, if there are various groups of students who are study the same course and taught by several instructors, the department may ask one or more of the course instructors to design one version of the final examination to be taken by all the students at the same time. The content of the examination is supposed to represent most of what had been taught (See Appendix 11, for more detail regarding the nature of the writing final exam). The total score

for any subject including English modules is out of 100 (percentage) which equals A+. The students must achieve at least 60%, which equals D, to pass the course. If a student fails to pass a module, they will need to retake this module in the subsequent semester and undertake another assessment.

Finally, the English language department at PU provides two months of English teaching training course which is one of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor's degree. Students are required to teach in a middle school for four weeks, which takes place during year three, and another four weeks in a secondary school during year four. The teaching training course aims to provide students with appropriate training in teaching methods, using available facilities such as textbooks, educational technologies, audio-visual aids, and prepare them to be qualified in their subject. This teaching training course is supervised and assessed by the university English teachers (lecturers) who are required to attend classes to evaluate their English major students' performance in teaching. After graduating in English language at Prince University, graduates are ready to apply for a variety of employment such as English teachers in private or public schools/universities, or translators in any institution.

For working at universities as an EFL teacher, there is only one requirement for Saudis which is to have a bachelor's degree with a high Grade Point Average (from 4.5 to 5.5) in an English major (e.g., translation, applied linguistics, English literature). Recruitment of faculty in Saudi universities follows official procedures and involves multiple stages. A bachelor's degree is the minimum qualification required to apply for a job at the university. If potential candidates meet this requirement, they progress to the next stage which involves a written test and then

they are invited to an oral interview to determine suitability for the job. Members of the college committee determine the applications on the points obtained by each candidate. Only the College committee has the authority to hire faculty staff in accordance with the guidelines and policies set by the Supreme University committee (PU, 2019).

According to Al-Nasser (2015), English language training in the Saudi context has some limitations that might affect the status of teaching and learning the English language in general. For example, English language teachers are generally not trained in linguistics as they mainly focus on preparing students to pass the exam. Moreover, there is no serious effort to improve the curriculum or syllabus and methods of teaching in Saudi Arabia are outdated. However, it is worth mentioning that the higher education system in Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in research and the establishment of new and more specialised universities to allow them full autonomy in their academic, administrative and financial way of working. Education reform is central to Saudi Arabia's large-scale policy initiative known as the Saudi Vision 2030 (MoE, 2021; Vision 2030, 2021). It is an attempt in overcoming ongoing systemic issues currently being experienced by creating new modern systems and formulating new standards in the recruitment of academic leaders based on competence, experience and strategic vision (MoE, 2021).

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Overview

This chapter reviews several areas of research relating to feedback in Second Language (L2) writing classrooms, in order to create the theoretical framework of this study. First, Section 3.2 examines the historical background to writing and the teaching of writing. The following sub-sections present various approaches of teaching writing and their focus: (1) the product approach (Section 3.2.1); (2) the process writing approach Section 3.2.2; (3) the genre approach (Section 3.2.3); and (4) the process-genre approach Section 3.2.4. These also describe the role played by feedback in each approach. Second, Section 3.3 defines the role of feedback in L2 teaching and learning and introduces the different approaches to the provision of feedback in writing classrooms. Third, section 3.4 presents teachers' beliefs and practices. Fourth, Section 3.5 examines the role of feedback from the perspective of a number of L2 acquisition theories. Fifth Section 3.6 discusses studies focusing on the effectiveness of different types of feedback, teachers' beliefs and practice regarding feedback on students' writing, related studies in the context of second and foreign languages addressing students' experience of feedback in English writing, and studies comparing students' and teachers' preference. Finally, Section 3.7 forms the conclusion, including a discussion of the gaps in the literature and methods used, as well as indicating the methods employed by the current study to answer the research questions.



### 3.2 Historical Background to Approaches to The Teaching of Writing

During the 1990s, research increased into the issues surrounding L2 writing (Matsuda, 2003). Cumming (1998) stated that in L2 'writing' generally refers to both written scripts and the act of thinking, composing, and encoding language as presented in such texts. These acts also entail discourse interactions within a socio-cultural context, with writing viewed as a written text, a composition, and a social connection. This indicates a number of potential difficulties in teaching (or learning) this skill in isolation from its social role.

Writing thus consists of an act of thinking, composing, and encoding language into text, raising the need to consider the following issues from the perspective of L2 education. First, L2 writing occurs in a particular situation of 'biliteracy', and it is therefore important to note potential variations relating to differences in: (1) background; (2) learners' proficiency in the first and second languages; (3) societies; and (4) the use of multiple languages for expression and interpretation. Second, L2 writing demands significant attention from students, teachers, curricula, as well as the overall educational contexts within which it is performed. This indicates a need to pay attention to the views of teachers and students, in order to create an understanding of L2 writing relevant to education (Cumming, 1994). These two aspects also reveal the reactions of L2 instructors when giving feedback and how this may impact on students' writing, as well as how these aspects can vary on an individual basis.

Moreover, it is also important to present a deep understanding of what is meant by L2 written work, including the forms that are currently being taught. Weigle (2002) adapted the classification of L2 written text types from Vahapassi (1982), summarising them into two major dimensions, i.e. cognitive processing and purpose, as discussed below.

The first dimension, cognitive processing, is made up of three types. The first consists of written text reproducing information, i.e. dictation or the filling in of a form. The second is the organising and arranging of familiar information, i.e. a laboratory report. The third includes inventing and generating new ideas or information (i.e. expository writing), which is primarily employed in an academic context, i.e. high school and university classes.

The second dimension is the purpose. For this, Weigle (2002) identified six different aspects: (1) writing to learn; (2) writing to convey emotions; (3) writing to inform; (4) writing to persuade; (5) writing to entertain; and (6) writing to keep in touch.

The syllabus used in my study (see Chapter 2) consists of the third type of cognitive processing, which focuses on the creation of new ideas and requires English language students to undertake academic writing. This is the form of writing studied by English major students at Prince University, in order to transform knowledge and learn English through writing.

Prior to reviewing the literature focussing on the issue of feedback, this section examines the historical background of these approaches to the teaching of writing, in order to enable me to understand how feedback fits into each approach.

It also introduces the advantages and limitations found in these approaches, along with the role played by feedback.

The teaching of writing can differ between contexts, depending on factors including students' level of competence and background. There are several approaches to the teaching of writing. Jordan (1997:164) who is a seminal scholar in EAP and writing research whose work has been hugely influential, stated that these "sometimes ... depend upon underlying philosophy, sometimes upon the starting point of the students, sometimes upon the purpose and type of writing and sometimes simply on personal preferences". Jordan (1997) also stated that the initial approach to the teaching of academic writing was controlled or guided composition, which emphasised the use of language structures and sentence patterns and was based on substitution tables or writing frames. The following development was the 'functional approach', which focused on the logical arrangement of forms of discourse in the context of a paragraph. This subsequently transferred from the creation of sentences and paragraphs to essay development, with its structure of introduction, body and conclusion, known as the 'product approach' (Jordan, 1997).

Reid (1993) highlighted two main approaches to the teaching of written ESL composition; firstly, the 'product approach', which was dominant in the 1970s, which focused on students building grammatically well-formed sentences, imitating models provided by their teachers. Second, the 'process approach', which arose in the 1980s, which guided, rather than controlled students' expression, using various writing skills, i.e. planning, reviewing, and the creation of drafts. Moreover, Flower and Hayes (1981) considered that students needed to be involved in higher levels of thinking about the various cognitive processes that support writing. They substantiated the argument that the focus on pre-, during-, and post-writing stages

describes physical processes, but is unable to reveal strategies and methods used by students to fulfil written tasks. This led Barnett (1989) to advise teachers to view writing as a process, including allowing students to become more involved in editing their own work, maintaining that such a student-centred approach is beneficial for both teachers and students, because it can improve writing skills, increase students' motivation, and save grading time.

The above approaches have been developed to teach and enhance students' writing competence. The following sections examine each of these approaches in depth, including their definitions of feedback.

### 3.2.1 The Product Approach

A focus on language structure is influenced by a combination of structural linguistics and behaviourist learning theory, as practiced during the 1960s (Silva, 1990). Kroll (2001) described this as a product-oriented approach, while Hyland (2003:3) considered that it paid direct attention to "writing as a product", which was labelled by some researchers as the 'Product Approach' (Badger & White, 2000). The Product Approach to writing was described by Pincas (1982, as cited in Badger & White, 2000) in terms of linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. This approach consists of four main stages. First, familiarisation, which develops students' awareness of features such as grammar and vocabulary from a given text, generally provided by the instructor; second, controlled writing, which gives learners more freedom to write, i.e. practising aspects acquired during the previous stage; third, guided writing, in which students imitate model texts; fourth, free writing, for which students produce a letter or essay based on the patterns previously practised (Badger & White, 2000). Ramies (1983)

illustrated these final three stages (i.e. controlled writing, guided writing and free writing) as forming a sequential technique or the controlled-to-free writing approach, i.e. giving the students sentences as exercises, including changing questions to statements or moving from the present to the past tense. After mastering this level, students move to the higher level of guided writing, i.e. describing a picture. Finally, students are allowed to try free compositions expressing their ideas. The main purpose of teachers' feedback is grading or testing (Raimes, 1983). Therefore, the product approach places considerable importance on the written text and linguistic knowledge. Badger and White (2000) viewed this as a writing approach resulting from the input of teachers.

However, Hyland (2003) drew attention to a number of drawbacks associated with this approach, including restricting students' creativity, as students may not be able to produce appropriate writing about a topic in which they are interested, because they are merely imitating the model text, or they may feel the particular writing structure cannot be applied in other situations. He further added that, although this approach focuses on syntax and grammar, these are not the only parameters by which good writing is measured. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) noted that this approach ignores the writing process, focusing on structure and the use of vocabulary as the main indicators of writing development. Sun (2009) added that this approach may be more suitable for low-level learners, as it relates to linguistic knowledge rather than linguistic skills. This approach can be seen to offer students an assumption that 'good' writing can only be produced by means of imitation (Badger & White, 2000).

Teachers following the product-based approach tends to place their emphasis on correcting forms without providing feedback encouraging students to revise their texts, making this grammatically focused correction thus the only source of feedback received by students. This removal of the opportunity to redraft and reassess tends to result in students becoming passive recipients of feedback (Zamel, 1983). This indicates that the feedback used in the product approach focuses on the accuracy of students' writing in the form of written or oral feedback. Ellis (1994) noted that the focus on form in the product approach can be undertaken through Corrective Feedback (CF), either direct correction of students' texts or indirect guidance by underlining or circling the incorrect forms, leaving them to be resolved by the student. An alternative method features error codes, i.e. 'S' to indicate a spelling error (see Section 3.3, for more detail).

Therefore, an investigation of the EFL context in this approach is crucial to an understanding of how teachers implement such an approach, along with exploring students' preferences and teachers' beliefs in relation to this form of feedback.

### 3.2.2 The Writing Process Approach

Murray (1972) drew up a strategy encouraging teachers to teach writing as a process rather than a product in secondary and postsecondary composition, known as the Process Approach. Murray (1972:4) believed this is to be a process of "discovery through language [and] exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language". Process writing was defined by Tribble (1996:160) as "an approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models". This infers that the focus is transferred

from the students' final product to their approach to the writing of text. This emphasizes the learners (i.e. the writer) rather than the text itself (Tribble, 1996). Students go through four main stages in the Process Approach: (1) pre-writing; (2) drafting; (3) reviewing; and (4) editing (Tribble 1996: 39). Teachers of written work were also advised by Barnett (1989) to view writing as a process, in particular by allowing students to become more involved in editing their own work. Barnett maintained that ensuring writing becomes a student-centred learning approach is beneficial for both teachers and students, as it can improve writing skills, increase students' motivation, and saves grading time.

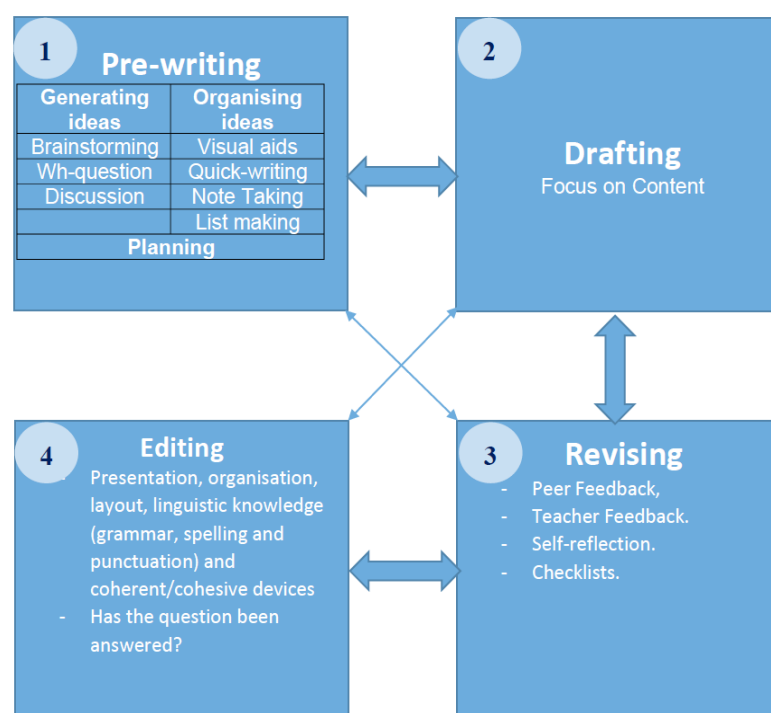


Figure 3-1: Writing Process Approach, adopted from Curry (1996, cited in Curry and Hewings, 2003:34)

The above figure shows the following: first, pre-writing, which includes brainstorming, i.e. students consider the subject of their written piece (Curry & Hewings, 2003). Hyland (2003) also noted that during this stage students undertake note-taking, data collection and create an outline. Badger and White (2000) stated

that when students collect information, they can organise it and plan their draft. Second, drafting, during which students commence putting their ideas down on paper in order to create the first draft (Badger & White, 2000). Third, reviewing, in which students are provided with feedback on their first draft by their teacher, peers or both (Badger & White, 2000). Students can also leave the draft for some time before returning to it for self-reflection (Curry & Hewings, 2003). Finally, editing and proofreading, when students correct, polish, and improve the form and layout of their final draft, benefiting from the feedback provided to them in the previous stages.

Badger and White (2000) indicated that the correction processes undertaken during this stage should include improvements in spelling and addressing grammar errors. In addition, Curry and Hewings (2003) stated that, if necessary, students can revert to previous stages, and that the writing process is not linear but recursive (as illustrated in Figure 3-1, above). For example, after completing a second draft, learners can consult a friend for feedback, even if they have been previously provided with feedback on the first draft. This peer feedback can be oral or written feedback. Zamel (1983) claimed that this approach helps students to explore their thoughts and presents them with the best possible readable form. Furthermore, Hyland (2003) highlighted that this approach focuses on the writer as an independent producer. The Process Approach focuses not only on how students apply their writing skills (i.e. exploring, planning, and organising ideas) but also on improving their linguistic knowledge, i.e. grammar and spelling (Badger & White, 2000). In this approach, the teacher acts as the facilitator between the learner and the text, encouraging learning rather than simply providing input (Badger and White, 2000). This role of the teacher is thus consistent with sociocultural theory, which



sees learning as socially constructed as a result of this interaction between teacher and learner (Nassaji, 2017). Hyland (2003) posited the role of the teacher in the process approach as being to help students develop their cognitive processes of writing through several pedagogical techniques, rather than to emphasise form, while at the same time guiding the writing activity to focus on the audience, the generation of ideas, as well as the organisation of text and the writing purpose (Badger and White, 2000). This demonstrates that, in the process approach, the teachers' role is to support students in assembling their knowledge and provide learners with opportunities and encouragement. The teachers are thus guides, supervising students during the stages as well as facilitators providing feedback to support students' texts.

However, Badger and White (2000) stated that the Process Approach focuses primarily on how students go through the set of processes, but not on the kinds of text to be produced, and that it lacks the provision of sufficient input, resulting in students failing to obtain sufficient linguistic knowledge. Hyland (2003:13) concurred, stating that the Process Approach fails to provide learners with the ability to develop different types of texts, instead exploring learners' internal meanings.

Therefore, this approach supports not only teachers' written feedback but also different types of feedback which include the one-to-one conference and peer feedback (Hyland, 2003). In the teacher-student conferencing feedback, the teacher can meet their students individually, or in groups, to discuss any issues related to writing or clarify comments, and students can evaluate each other's work and make changes to their writing and/or write suggestions (see Section 3.3, for more detail). To summarise: Hyland and Hyland (2006:77) defined feedback in the process

approach as “an important developmental tool moving learners through multiple drafts towards the capability for effective self-expression”.

### 3.2.3 The Genre Approach

The Genre Approach, like the Product Approach, focuses on a particular purpose of writing (Badger & White, 2000), which Tribble (1996) stated as highlighting the role of the reader, therefore introducing a social feature engaging the writer with the reader in the production of a written piece of work. In addition, Tuan (2011) emphasised the relationship between genres and content, e.g. letters, recipes and reports. Cope and Kalantzis (1993:11 cited in Badger and White, 2000) noted that this approach: “has three phases: modelling the target genre, where learners are exposed to examples of the genre they have to produce; the construction of a text by learners and teacher; and, finally, the independent construction of texts by learners”.

Hyland (2004:10-16) highlighted many benefits of genre-based L2 writing instruction, including: (1) explicitness; (2) systematic; (3) needs-based; (4) supportive; (5) empowering; (6) critical; and (7) consciousness-raising. In addition to addressing the needs of ESL writers, genre pedagogies also draw attention to how text can work as a communication tool (Hyland, 2007). However, there has also been some criticism of the genre approach, with Byram (2004) stating that it underestimates writing skills and overlooks existing knowledge students may need to complete their task. Given that teachers are responsible for selecting the models for their students to follow, this inhibits any free expression of ideas (Caudery, 1998). A final criticism of the genre approach is that it views learners as passive (Badger and White, 2000).

### 3.2.4 The Process-Genre Approach

The process approach arose in the 1980s, as a reaction to the limitations of the product approach of the 1970s, while the genre approach was a reaction to the limitations of the process approach (Gee, 1997 cited in Badger and White, 2000). As noted above, the genre approach has been criticised for underestimating students' knowledge and viewing them as being passive learners (Badger and White, 2000). The Process-Genre Approach emerged out of these criticisms, drawing together the key features of each, arguing that the writing class should involve three types of knowledge: first, knowledge of language from the Product and Genre approaches; second, the knowledge of context and the writing intentions from the Genre Approach; and third, the use of language from the Process Approach (Badger & White, 2000). This approach is described from the point of view of writing and writing development. By recognising all this knowledge, learners can improve their writing and increase their input (Badger & White, 2000). Therefore, it is not possible to separate writing from a specific social situation, or when written with a specific purpose. In addition, teachers can provide support to those lacking sufficient subject knowledge by; first, providing instruction and clarification; second, organising students to work in groups; and third, providing samples of model texts for students to follow (Hyland, 2007). This suggests that this is a flexible approach, capable of responding to the aspects a teacher believes to be vital: "what input is needed will depend on their [the teachers'] particular group of learners" (Badger & White, 2000:158). This implies feedback to be a significant aspect of writing pedagogy (Hyland & Hyland, 2019a), indicating the importance of considering the differing types required depending on the pedagogical purpose of a piece of writing. According to Hyland (2003), feedback can involve the consideration of a number of

questions (i.e. Who can provide feedback? To whom should feedback be provided?; and In what contexts should feedback take place?). These concerns are discussed below in the review of the historical background in the following section, which focuses on characteristics, advantages, and drawbacks of this approach.

### **3.3 Feedback in Second/Foreign Language Writing**

. After reviewing the historical background of the main approaches to the teaching of writing, this section defines the feedback employed in L2 teaching and learning. There have been several previous definitions, with Lalande (1982:141) noting that “feedback is any procedure used to inform a learner where an instructional response is right or wrong”. In addition, Keh (1990: 294) stated that feedback can be defined as “input from the reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision”. Furthermore, Kepner (1991: 141) defined feedback as “any procedure used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong”. Moreover, different terminology has been used for feedback, i.e. ‘comments’, ‘response’, or ‘correction’ (Kepner, 1991: 141). These definitions indicate that each definition has a number of similarities, in that they relate to the need for teachers to point out the weaknesses and strengths of students’ written texts, by indicating and/or correcting errors and providing new information or correction. As discussed in detail below, feedback on L2 writing takes many forms, including: (1) Written corrective feedback (WCF); (2) oral-conferences; (3) peer feedback; and (4) computer-mediated feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

### 3.3.1 Written Corrective Feedback

Written feedback from the teacher is considered the most effective form of corrective feedback and, as such, plays an important role in the ESL and EFL English writing classroom (Hyland, 2003; Hyland and Hyland, 2006a) for encouraging the development of students' writing. Hyland and Hyland (2006b: 206) noted that it can play a part in bringing "a heavy informational load, offering commentary on the form and content of the text to encourage students to develop their writing and consolidate their learning". Therefore, the main function of such feedback is to focus on promoting the linguistic accuracy of written texts, i.e. grammar and vocabulary (Ellis, 2005) and/or written commentary, which emphasise language form, organisation, and content (Goldstein, 2004). Teachers of writing therefore use different techniques and areas of focus to support their students. Table 3-1 below presents written feedback strategies adapted from Ellis (2008).

Table 3-1: Written corrective feedback strategies and description

<b>Strategies for providing Teacher's Written Feedback</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Direct Feedback</b>	The teacher provides the student with the correct form
<b>2. Indirect Feedback</b>	The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.
a. Indicating + locating the error.	This takes the form of underlining and the use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text.
b. Indication only	This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text
<b>3. Metalinguistic Feedback</b>	The teacher provides a metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error.

a. Use of error code	The teacher writes codes in the margin.
b. Brief grammatical descriptions	The teacher indicates errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text
<b>4. The focus of Feedback</b>	This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. This distinction can be applied to each of the above options.
a. Unfocused Feedback	Unfocused feedback is extensive.
b. Focused feedback	Focused feedback is intensive.


Written feedback usually takes the form of direct correction, focusing on editing or correcting the text by supplying the correct answer (Sugita, 2006). Bitchener and Ferris (2012) stated that direct Corrective Feedback (CF) aims to help students edit and improve their writing when undertaking subsequent assignments. In direct or explicit feedback, the correct form is provided near (or above) the linguistic error (Bitchener et al., 2005; Ferris, 2003) and includes crossing out errors. In rewriting, the teacher rewrites the incorrect word/sentence in a correct manner, which can also include correcting spelling and tenses. In addition, the teacher adds missing words or letters, i.e. a prefix, suffix, preposition, or word (Bitchener, 2008). Table 3-2 summarises these forms of direct CF, including illustrative examples for further clarification.

Table 3-2: Examples of direct feedback

Direct corrective feedback forms	Examples
Crossing out	<del>at 9:00 the shop will open</del> → the shop opens at 9:00
Rewriting	arrived We <del>arrive</del> ^ home yesterday
Addition	read swim a I always <del>reading</del> books and <del>swimming</del> twice ^ week.

In addition, WCF can also take the form of an indirect correction, indicating an error by actions such as circling or underlining, without presenting the correction (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). This form differs from direct feedback, in that the teacher only indicates errors, with students required to provide the correction (Ferris, 2002). Table 3-3 illustrates examples of indirect feedback.

Table 3-3: Examples of indirect feedback

Indirect feedback	Example
Underlining errors	We <u>arrives</u> home yesterday.
Circling errors	We  home yesterday.
Highlighting errors	We <b>arrives</b> home yesterday.

One type of written feedback is that of error codes which is metalinguistic, in which teachers use correction codes to indicate the location and the type of error (e.g., S for spelling and T for tense) without making the correction. In addition, error codes can be used to identify the nature of errors, with Ferris (2002) highlighting that teachers benefit from this method as they can write the codes rapidly, thus

saving time and effort. Examples of the coding technique are listed in Table 3-4, below.

Table 3-4: Coding feedback

Symbol	Meaning	Example of error	Corrected sentence
<b>WW</b>	Wrong word	The food is delicious. <sup>ww</sup> <u>Besides</u> , the restaurant is always crowded	The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded
<b>Ref</b>	Pronoun reference error	The restaurant's speciality is fish. <sup>ref</sup> <u>They</u> are always fresh.	The restaurant's speciality is fish. It is always fresh.
<b>Conj</b>	Conjunction	Garlic shrimp, fried clams, <sup>conj</sup> ^ broiled lobster are the most popular dishes.	Garlic shrimp, fried clams, and broiled lobster are the most popular dishes.

Thus, the diagnosis and correction of the error are left to the learner. A distinction in the indirect feedback strategy is that between coded and uncoded feedback, with the former indicating the exact location and type of the error, while the latter omits to specify the type of error.

Written commentary was defined by Goldstein (2004, 2005) as a method of providing learners with a written response that allows them to recognise whether or not they have achieved the aim and purpose of the text. This can be viewed as a written interaction between teacher and student (Goldstein, 2005), with learners encouraged to edit and improve their text based on their teacher's comments (Goldstein, 2004) in order to develop their writing skills. It also raises students' awareness of writing as "a social act involving the author and readers" (Goldstein, 2005: 5). Written commentary can take a number of different forms. Ferris et al.



(1997) developed a model (see Table 3-5) for analysing teachers' written comments on the written essays of ESL university students. This model classifies teachers' comments under two main categories, first, the aim or intent of the comment and second, the linguistic features of the comment. Each heading has its own forms and functions, as presented in the table below.

Table 3-5: Categories for comments Analysis, adapted from Ferris et al. (1997)

The aim or intent of the comment	Linguistic Features of the Comment
Directive Ask for information. Make suggestion/ request. Give information. Grammar / Mechanics Positive Comments	Syntactic Form Question Statement/ Exclamation Imperative Presence/ Absence of Hedged language items Text-specific/ Generic

The above categories were applied to a sub-sample of papers, and further refinements made to the model. Once a scheme was finalised, the remainder of the sample was analysed. The first category focuses on understanding the purpose of the teachers' comments, while the second identifies the linguistic feature of the comments. Ferris et al. (1997:177) considered that this analytic system can help teachers and their students to become more "aware of both the intent and the forms of their (the teachers') written comments".

However, this model has been criticised by Hyland and Hyland (2001:190), who felt that, although it addresses the aims of the teachers' comments: "they contain rather over-complex lists of text variables, which may be too detailed to be used by teachers wanting to examine their own feedback". This led them to develop their own coding categories, consisting of praise, criticism, and suggestion. First, they defined praise as "an act which attributes credit to another for some

characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback. It therefore suggests a more intense or detailed response than simple agreement” (Hyland and Hyland, 2001:186). Second, they defined criticism as “an expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment” on a text (Hyland, 2000a: 44). Third, they considered that suggestion contains “an explicit recommendation for remediation, a relatively clear and accomplishable action for improvement, which is sometimes referred to as ‘constructive criticism’” (Hyland and Hyland, 2001:186).

Written commentary includes comments specifically targeting a sentence (e.g., ‘what do you mean in this sentence?’), or the structure of the writing, or more generally the whole text or essay (e.g., good conclusion) (Ferris et al., 1997; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Furthermore, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) suggested that positive and negative written commentaries are vital to develop students’ writing. However, some researchers have pointed out the challenges encountered by learners when receiving written feedback.

Table 3-6 summarises the description of teachers’ feedback potentially resulting in difficulties of understanding.

Table 3-6: Description of teachers’ written feedback

The researchers	Describe some teachers’ feedback as
<b>Sommers (1982:152)</b>	“Vague directives that are not text-specific”; “most teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to text.”
<b>Zamel (1985:79)</b>	“Confusing, arbitrary, and inaccessible.”
<b>Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990:155)</b>	“Unclear, inaccurate, and unbalanced.”
<b>Leki (1992:122)</b>	“Sometimes students are not sure exactly which part of their text a comment is addressed to. Sometimes the

	gist of the comment itself is unclear ... Sometimes the comment seems inapplicable to the student.”
<b>Ferris and Hedgcock, (2005: 188-189)</b>	“Illegible, cryptic (e.g., consisting of symbols, single-word questions, comments), or confusing (e.g., consisting of questions that are unclear, suggestions that are difficult to incorporate into emergent drafts)”.

My research therefore explores and analyses teachers’ written feedback on students’ written coursework, as well as the aims and purposes of their commentary. At the same time, I investigate the way students deal with the written feedback, in order to understand how such a feedback is used in an EFL university context in relation to the reactions of students.

### 3.3.2 Oral Feedback

Oral feedback is also known as teacher-student conferencing, with Hyland (2003:194) listing many forms additional to classroom activities. This includes teachers talking to students in groups, a brief discussion, workshop, or monthly meeting with each student.

Therefore, it can be defined as a discussion about graded or corrected compositions between the teacher and individual students or a group of students. This type of feedback has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, Patthey-Chavez and Farris (1997) stated that, during such conferencing, L2 students can ask questions capable of improving their subsequent performance. Zamel (1985) also believed that oral feedback offers a detailed discussion allowing L2 students to obtain more comments than in written feedback. She also claimed that students faced difficulties in understanding ESL teachers’ written comments, while teachers can often misinterpret intended meanings, thus indicating the need for this to be negotiated in face-to-face conversations.

However, Goldstein and Conrad (1990) raised the potential drawback for those students lacking the relevant skills, particularly if they have little prior experience of meetings and oral communication. Hyland (2003) also claims that some teachers find it a challenge to provide oral feedback with written feedback due to time constraints and/or because of a lack of sufficient skills of interaction. In addition, their students may have expectations that the teachers will proofread, rather than providing feedback on their writing (Hyland, 2003). In addition, a significant factor that needs to be recognised is the power equation between the teachers and their students. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) argued that this could present obstacles, particularly if, for cultural or personal reasons, students experience difficulties in requesting further clarification or asking questions. This is one of the essential factors I considered while collecting the data for the current study.

### 3.3.3 Peer Feedback

Peer feedback was defined by Liu and Hansen (2002) as:

The use of learners as sources of information for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing. (Liu and Hansen, 2002:1)

This indicates that peer feedback requires interaction, a type of feedback advocated by socio-cultural theory, which focuses on learning as a social (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory's perspective on each type of feedback is presented in detail in Section 3.5.4. The definition above indicates that peer feedback offers a number of

benefits for learners, including increasing their awareness by engaging peer comments in revision and editing, thus facilitating improvement (Liu & Hansen, 2002). This infers that peer feedback can prove beneficial for L2 students, in particular those who are 'novice writers', enabling them to understand how readers see their work and to revise, rethink, and rewrite their ideas. This helps L2 writers to understand whether their ideas are clear and well presented (Hyland & Hyland, 2006:90). Section 3.2.2 discussed how students' planning, writing, and reviewing forms one of the main practices of the Process Approach, which can be undertaken through several feedback tools, such as peer feedback (Hansen and Liu, 2005).

A number of researchers in different contexts have reported the affective benefits of peer feedback when properly implemented. It is beneficial not only for the development of second language writing and the language-learning process, but also provide cooperative and collaborative learning supports and social interactions.

For example, Leki (1990a) stated that peer feedback improves critical and analytical skills, in particular through responding to multiple drafts from different students. This enables students to develop their self-confidence by comparing their abilities to the strengths and weaknesses of their peers, so encouraging them to review and evaluate their work (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Hyland (2000b) also supported the use of oral interactions with peers during the writing process, as this can facilitate social and affective learning. Furthermore, Ferris (2003a:175) advocated the benefits of peer feedback, stating: "I personally cannot imagine a writing course without using it extensively and regularly".

Recent research has identified peer feedback as a fertile context for enhancing student learning through feedback processes. For example, a study by Nicol et al. (2014) investigated the different learning benefits that arise when learners receive feedback reviews from their peers, and when they prepare feedback reviews for their peers, to gain in depth insight into the cognitive processes that are activated. This research reports on the peer review strategy when adopted in a first-year engineering design class at the University of Strathclyde. The study involves 82 students, each of whom produced a draft of written work individually. The peer review task involved two review activities. First, each student reviewed and provided feedback comments on the written work draft produced by two of their peers. Second, each student reviewed their own draft using the same criteria provided for the peer reviews. All the review activities were conducted online and supported by Peer Mark software. An updated draft was required as part of the final submission for this design class. The level of participation in the peer review task was high. Of the 82 students, 62 completed all three reviews – two peer reviews and a self-review. In addition, 15 students completed two peer reviews without a self-review, and five students completed only one peer review. Notably, this study did not involve students marking or rating other students' work in an assessment format; rather, it specifically focused on peer review and feedback. The findings reveal that producing feedback reviews engages students in multiple acts of evaluative judgement, both regarding the work of their peers, and, through reflection, about their own work. Thus, it involves them in both invoking and applying criteria to explain judgements, shifting control of feedback processes into students' hands, thereby reducing the requirement for external feedback.

Another recent study in a university context conducted by Lei (2017) with EFL English major students in the third year. The study aims to investigate the incorporation and effectiveness of student written feedback and their attitudes towards peer feedback in writing class. A qualitative case study approach was adopted including composition drafts, student written feedback and interviews. The findings show an acceptance of peer feedback, and that peer feedback provides them with more chances to discuss their writing with their peers and understand their peers' suggestions on the composition improvement. However, it was found that more feedback is given on form rather than content which reveals that students are less capable of giving content comments than giving form critiques, as Keh (1990) claimed.

Another recent mixed methods study, conducted by Alsehibany (2021) in EFL at a Saudi university, aimed to examine 30 students' attitude toward peer feedback activities in writing classes and investigate the challenges that may prevent the use of such activities in Saudi EFL writing classes. The study collected data over a period of eight weeks via written essays, a writing checklist, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The essays involved different types of paragraphs throughout the course such as descriptive, comparative and informative paragraphs, whereas the focus of this study is on descriptive essays only. The study checklist was adopted from Merriam's (2009) study, and was explained by the teacher to the students before they were asked to prepare and deliver peer feedback. It contained questions that encouraged the students to analyse, evaluate and comment on their peer's work. An example of such a list question was "Did the writer start with a topic sentence?", if "Yes," underline it, and if "No," suggest one. The checklist comprised three parts: Content, Organization,

mechanism. The study results indicated that students had a positive attitude toward peer feedback, and a checklist was provided for the EFL writing class. For example, their second written essay (post) had improved, including fewer mistakes than the first one. Interestingly, the majority of the participants stated that peer feedback had improved their writing quality and enhanced their writing and awareness of their weaknesses and errors. Moreover, the interviews had highlighted the chief challenges that may affect the use of peer feedback in EFL writing classes; i.e. students' level of English proficiency, time constraints, nervousness about correcting one another's essays, and reluctance to correct all of the errors. Moreover, some students did not take peer feedback seriously, and did not work consistently with their peers.

To date, a number of benefits have been established as deriving from such an approach (Nicol et al., 2014; Lei, 2017; Alsehibany, 2021). These include, for example, developing analytical skills, clarification of the required level of work, maximizing students' levels of responsibility and involvement, and enhancing learning and confidence. The students developed their analytical ability, first by evaluating knowledge, and then through the process of giving and receiving criticism. Drawing on the studies above, peer review practices were found to potentially benefit learning, not only because of the quantity and variety of feedback the students receive from their multiple peers, but also because the provision and use of feedback are temporally more tightly coupled. Therefore, peer feedback practices are especially effective in bringing into play the constructivist learning principles advocated by feedback researchers (Nicol et al., 2014).

Despite the many English writing teachers and course practitioners integrating peer feedback into their courses who have reported positive experiences



on the part of students (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), a number of concerns also exist. These include first, that some students can find it challenging to identify the errors made by their peers and so may struggle to offer valuable feedback (Leki, 1990), and second, that peer feedback addresses surface-level errors rather than advice to improve the clarity of meaning (Keh, 1990). There are also studies that show that several difficulties need to be overcome if peer response is to prove effective in the classroom. One of the chief concerns expressed by students is that their peers are not proficient enough to provide useful feedback, and that time constraints affect their effectiveness (Rollinson, 2005). Therefore, such interventions are often associated with a significant increase in academic staff workload, which is problematic given current limitations on resources and the rising student numbers in higher education.

I personally believe that the success of this type of feedback, particularly in my own culture and context, depends on the level of trust students have in their peers. For example, some Saudi university students only wish to receive peer feedback from those they perceive to have a higher level of proficiency, evidenced by their grades (Alsehibany, 2021). Equally, others are reluctant for their work to be reviewed by any of their fellow students, due to being unwilling to reveal their own weaknesses or from a dread of being judged as found by Alhomaïdan (2016). This implies a fear of negative evaluation as a main reason for students resisting engaging in peer feedback. Consequently, Ferris (2003) claims that teachers have a great responsibility to make peer feedback successful in their writing classrooms as they need to understand that careful planning of applying peer feedback in the writing classrooms is the key for the success of this approach. On the other hand, researchers (e.g. Stanley, 1992), state that enough training would help students

provide feedback to their peers and to be aware that their feedback should not only focus only on local issues, but also on global issues of their peers' written texts.

Having myself studied in such a context, I have also raised the issue of peer feedback, discussing this issue with the participants of the current study, in order to reshape and update perceptions of this type of feedback.

### 3.3.4 Computer-Meditated Feedback

As technology continues to develop, and becomes increasingly accessible, the role of computers in feedback may grow in significance. The advance in educational technologies, and the increase in online educational provision, has already led to delivering and mediating feedback through a computer becoming a customary practice (e.g., online courses, online supervision). Such online feedback is often remotely provided by a tutor, peers or is computer generated. There are two ways in which computers are employed in language teaching. Firstly, synchronous writing, which enables students to communicate with each other or their tutor through Local Area Networks or online chat forums in real-time and secondly, asynchronous writing, which includes communication by means of emails between students and tutors (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).

Ware (2011) defined the use of the computer as a tool for writing assistance as “web-based and offer(ing) a core set of support features, including a writing manual, model essays, and translators” (Ware, 2011: 770). These programs allow students to submit their written texts and to “receive several different types of feedback, including holistic and analytic scores, graphic displays of feedback such as bar charts tabulating problematic areas, generic feedback on revising strategies, and individually tailored suggestions for improving particular aspects of their writing”

(Ware, 2011: 770). Such tools also allow students' writing to be available to their teacher and peers, enabling the learner to benefit from teacher and peer feedback by means of an online platform. Computer-mediated feedback has both benefits and limitations, with one advantage being that comments are stored electronically and can thus be accessed both by students and teachers, and, when printed, can also facilitate in-class discussions.

To summarise: this section has demonstrated that the response to students' writing is not represented by a single scheme or method, but by a range of ways in which teachers can improve understanding of their texts either by the teacher, peers, written, oral, and/or via a mediated tool. The following section discusses teachers' beliefs concerning feedback, in order to understand the phenomenon from their perspective.

### 3.3.5 Students' Engagement with Feedback

In recent years, student engagement has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers examining the field of ESL and EFL teaching and learning because it plays a vital role in the English language learning process and the development of learning outcomes. Providing feedback on the linguistic errors that inform L2 learners' writing is one of the central objectives of L2 teachers. In view of the large amount of time they spend offering written corrective feedback (WCF) on L2 learners' written texts, and its benefits, the majority of teachers expect their students to engage deeply with that feedback (Lee, 2008a). However, this expectation is not always met (Ferris et al., 2013) due to the low engagement of students with peer feedback. For example, students may only respond to some of the peer feedback they are provided with (Min, 2006). To assist teachers with enhancing their practices

when delivering different types of feedback, we need to develop a more thorough understanding of what encourages learners' engagement with the different types of feedback they receive. Undoubtedly, learner engagement plays a central role in the feedback process by mediating teachers' provision of feedback and learning outcomes (Ellis, 2010). A well-articulated definition of learner engagement is provided by Ellis's (2010:342) componential framework for corrective feedback, in which learner engagement requires they "respond to the feedback they receive" and learners' engagement is described as influenced by "CF type, individual difference factors, and contextual variables together". According to Ellis's framework, learners' engagement with corrective feedback can be examined from three different perspectives.

First, the cognitive perspective refers to "how learners attend to the CF they receive" (Ellis, 2010: 342). Moreover, Han and Hyland (2015) subdivided cognitive engagement into three components regarding WCF, namely awareness of feedback, cognitive operations, and meta-cognitive operations, which are explored based on the level of understanding about the feedback given. Second, the behavioural perspective refers to the "way learners uptake oral corrections or revise their written texts" (Ellis, 2010: 342). In other words, focusing on students' behaviours after receipt of peer feedback involves how students incorporate feedback when revising their writing (Zheng & Yu, 2018), and the observable strategies they adopt to revise and improve their written drafts (Han & Hyland, 2015). The third, affective perspective refers to "how learners respond attitudinally to the CF" (Ellis, 2010: 342). This perspective is sub-constructed by Han and Hyland (2015:33) to explain "the immediate emotional reactions upon the receipt of WCF

and changes in these emotions over the revision process and attitudinal responses toward WCF”.

Students’ engagement with the feedback varies between individual learners. For example, Zheng et al (2020) found that students’ individual beliefs and goals, alongside contextual factors, such as student-teacher relationship, contribute to the variability in students’ responses and their engagement with WCF. In line with this, Ferris (2010) and Hyland (2011) also found that such individual differences influenced students’ development of linguistic accuracy through writing, including how they engage with their course in general and WCF in particular.

In addition, some learners are also highly committed to using WCF to improve their drafts, and even their subsequent writing, while others are reluctant to accept or utilise the feedback they receive to improve their texts (Hyland, 2003, Storch and Wigglesworth, 2010). Moreover, individual learners’ affective responses to WCF also vary subject to individual factors (Hyland, 2015).

Henderson et al. (2019) propose that an understanding of feedback needs to incorporate issues such as feedback policy, culture and practices, alongside an awareness of the attributes of the individual, as they found that the most prevalent types of comments among staff respondents concerned students’ desire to engage with feedback. They found that feedback is a complex process, influenced by an ecology of practices, individual factors and contextual constraints, which influence student engagement and involvement with feedback provided. Clearly, an understanding of learners’ attitude towards feedback on their written coursework, and the way they respond to this feedback will reflect their interactions and engagement with feedback and will be a crucial component in understanding feedback processes in the EFL university context. Therefore, one objective of the

current study is to understand how students engage with and utilise the feedback they receive, and so it explores the processes of feedback between writing teachers and their students, and students' alterations to their future writing based on feedback.

### **3.4 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices**

The examination of the literature revealed a tendency for educational researchers to focus on beliefs (Borg, 1999a, 1999b, 2006; Pajares, 1992; Mansour, 2009; Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). They tend to recognise the importance of such beliefs for teachers' behaviours and for improving their professional development and practices. Pajares (1992:307) stated that "the difficulty in studying teachers' beliefs has been caused by definitional problems, poor conceptualisations, and differing understandings of beliefs and belief structures". Pajares (1992) argued that educational inquiry should focus on teachers' beliefs, but also highlighted a demand for clearer conceptualisations, and consideration of the key assumptions, as well as the need for a more consistent approach to the use of meanings and an evaluation of the constructs of belief, including an assessment of teachers' verbal expressions, behaviours and predispositions. Borg (2001: 186) offered a detailed definition of the term 'belief' as being "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour". He also defined teachers' beliefs as "a term usually used to refer to teachers' pedagogic beliefs, or those beliefs of relevance to an individual's teaching" (Borg, 2001:187). Consequently, educational researchers view teaching as a thinking activity, for which teachers construct their own workable and personal

theories of teaching, rather than applying predetermined principles and rules (Borg, 2003).

This importance of teachers' beliefs has therefore shaped my own focus when investigating EFL teachers' beliefs towards providing feedback on EFL students' written coursework. Despite the numerous studies related to teachers' beliefs, many educational researchers remain focused on examining their definition and nature. Thus, I consider it vital to clarify the terms, and offer a definition of such beliefs, in order to better understand the association between teachers' beliefs and practice. From the definitions above, I have understood that teachers' beliefs are a combination of elements that reflect the following:

The values, ideas, feelings and attitudes expressed from the point of view of teachers of writing in relation to the learning and teaching context, including what should be done and what is preferable in teaching writing and in giving feedback on students' writing.

This definition therefore covers all aspects of belief and practice, including their interrelationship, which will be reported by the teachers in the current study during the data collection process. Understanding teachers' beliefs and all aspects of their role is a significant area of research. Phipps and Borg (2009: 382) believed that "a more realistic understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices can emerge when the analysis of what teachers do is the basis of eliciting and understanding their beliefs". Therefore, the current study explores teachers' beliefs in relation to their practice when giving feedback on students' written coursework.

### 3.5 Theoretical Standpoints of SLA on Corrective Feedback

It is crucial to discuss L2 acquisition (SLA) theories after first defining feedback and discussing the role of written feedback in second and foreign language learning, in order to obtain an understanding from various differing standpoints. Guo (2015) pointed out that theories may guide research in CF, while WCF studies may contribute to theory-building by revealing how L2 develops. In this section, I examine the different SLA standpoints relating to WCF in L2 learning.

Before the 1980s, L2 acquisition theorists and researchers put forward a number of views concerning the role of CF. Early perspectives on CF in L2 learning considered that errors interfered with L2 development and should therefore be eliminated completely. In particular, during the 1950s, and for part of the 1960s, two of the major concerns of language teaching consisted of error prevention and correction, heavily influenced by the behaviourist perspective on language learning. Correction was considered the exclusive preserve of teachers, who were expected to show no acceptance of errors (Oladejo, 1993). Due to the dominance of the behaviourist perspective in language teaching and learning, models such as the monitor model of Krashen (1982) tended to guide languages teachers' perspectives of CF, particularly in viewing correcting errors as a deficiency potentially hindering L2 development.

Krashen (1982) introduced his Monitor Model to explain the relationship between learning and acquisition and define their mutual influence. This consisted of five hypotheses, which Brown (2000:274) stated: "are really an interrelated set of hypotheses and/or claims about how people become proficient in a L2". The first consists of the acquisition-learning hypothesis, which considers learning and



acquisition as mutually exclusive, i.e. there is no place for explicit instruction or CF. The second hypothesis is the Monitor, which shows that acquired knowledge serves as a monitor to correct or treat the output of the system, so implying a role for CF in learning. Thirdly, the natural order hypothesis states that the rules and features of the target language are acquired in a predictable order, even with the inclusion of CF, and do not change. The fourth is the input hypothesis, which is considered the central component of the overall theory. This hypothesis claims that there is no need for CF or grammar instruction, due to learners' exposure to comprehensible input, which contributes to language acquisition. Consequently, it is linked to the final hypothesis, which is the affective filter.

The 'affective filter', posited by Dulay and Burt (1977), acts to prevent input from being used for language acquisition. Acquirers with optimal attitudes are hypothesised to have 'low' affective filters. Classrooms encouraging such filters are considered to promote low levels of anxiety among students, ensuring they remain "off the defensive" (Stevick, 1976, cited in Krashen, 1982: 32). The concept of the affective filter defines the language teacher as "someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (Krashen, 1982: 32). This hypothesis therefore assumes that input may not be processed if the filter is too high. This led Krashen (1982) to note that CF may delay L2 development, as it may impact on the learners' confidence and raise the affective filter (Chen et al., 2016).

To summarise: previous decades have tended to neglect the role of feedback, being criticised by L2 researchers and theorists, psychologists, and linguists, such as Gregg (1984:94), who claimed that Krashen's hypotheses were "undefined terms, unmotivated constructs, lack empirical content and thus falsifiability, lack explanatory power". However, perspectives arising from the

cognitive and sociocultural viewpoint subsequently began to address the role of feedback from the opposite direction, as discussed in the following section.

Several types of research have focused on the cognitive and sociocultural value of CF in language acquisition, depending on a wide range of arguments supporting the inclusion of feedback and the importance of its role in the process of second and foreign language acquisition. It is therefore important to examine these viewpoints in detail, including: (1) the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1995); (2) the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001); (3) the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996); and (4) sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

### 3.5.1 Interaction Hypothesis

The interaction approach considers the activity (i.e. input, output, and feedback) occurring during interaction (Long, 1983, 1996). This approach fully examines the role of feedback and argues that language learning is stimulated by communicative pressure, determining both the association between communication and acquisition and the factors mediating this association (Gass, 2003). Feedback takes place as a result of this communication, assuming two roles in language acquisition. Long (1981, 1996) stated that the interaction hypothesis views the interaction between learner and teacher in terms of the oral feedback as a facilitator, assisting in the achievement of a mutual understanding of the input. Although this hypothesis is based on an oral interaction, this does not mean that it fails to support the role of feedback on written errors, which can be provided orally by means of discussion-scaffolding between teacher and learner. Moreover, written feedback can be provided in a combined manner, i.e. the learner first receives written feedback on their texts, followed by oral feedback (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).

### 3.5.2 Output Hypothesis

Regarding the output hypothesis, Swain (1985, 1995) noted that students in immersion classes develop and receive comprehension skills (input) with a minimum focus on production skills (output), which led her to conclude that, for the effective acquisition of language and grammatical accuracy, input alone is insufficient. According to the output hypothesis, CF plays a role in promoting students' learning when they process written input, in particular by highlighting the gaps between their interlanguage and the target language. Feedback thus enables the learner to become aware of his/her errors, enabling them to undertake appropriate modifications and subsequently consider the relevant linguistic structures in any subsequent input (Van Beuningen, 2010).

### 3.5.3 Noticing Hypothesis

The noticing hypothesis was proposed by Schmidt (1990, 1994), who claimed that "input does not become intake for learning until it is noticed" (Schmidt, 2010: 721), i.e. in order to process input, learners need to be able to recognise such input, resulting in it becoming intake. Schmidt defined intake as "that part of the input that the learner notices" and stated that the process is one that is conscious (Schmidt, 1994: 139). Therefore, any language form that is not noticed fails to become intake and or processed for learning, i.e. students are unable to learn from their grammatical errors and structures unless feedback enables them to recognise them. Schmidt (2010) proposed that noticing is a conscious process necessary for learning. He suggests that, in order to "notice the gap" and resolve errors, learners need to make a conscious comparison between their output and the input of the target language. This indicates the vital role played by feedback, with CF offering learners opportunities to recognise the gap (or mismatch) between their own output

errors and their teachers' input feedback, so encouraging them to modify their erroneous output (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). Thus, noticing, triggered by CF, promotes self-correction and facilitates language development (Bitchener and Storch, 2016).

### 3.5.4 Socio-Cultural Theory

A further interactionist perspective is socio-cultural theory, which was based on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), and further developed by Leontiev (1978) and other scholars, within the discipline of L2 acquisition (e.g., Lantolf, 2000 and Swain et al., 2011, cited in Bitchener and Storch, 2016). Vygotsky (1978) stated that humans require mediation, in the form of specific tools, to develop learning, i.e., humans' relationship with the world is mediated by tools and symbols. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) stated that:

Affective error correction and language learning depend crucially on mediation provided by other individuals, who in consort with the learner dialogically co-construct a zone of proximal development in which feedback as regulation becomes relevant and can therefore be appropriated by learners to modify their interlanguage systems. (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994: 480)

For example, in an educational context, feedback in terms of L2 writing can be considered as one tool for the development of writing. In Vygotsky's (1978) theory, the main key consists of language development taking place during interaction between teacher and learner. This Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978:86).

Negotiation is an important factor of language learning in ZPD, particularly as it facilitates learners in developing aspects they have not yet mastered independently, i.e. through negotiation. Thus, becoming aware of a learner's developmental ZPD level enables experts to provide more appropriate feedback (Nassaji and Cumming, 2000). In addition, 'scaffolding' forms an alternative concept indicating forms of guidance to support learners in their progress through ZPD. This concept was introduced by Wood et al. (1976:90) as:

(A) process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts. This scaffolding consists essentially of the adult 'controlling' those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence. The task thus proceeds to a successful conclusion.

This also captures the sense in which a learner can be supported in mastering a task (or achieving understanding) by means of: (1) encouragement; (2) focusing; (3) demonstrations; (4) reminders; and (4) suggestions. However, the role of this scaffolding is temporary, i.e. the adult's intellect provides a temporary support for the learner until he/she has achieved a new level of understanding and develops their knowledge. In addition, effective scaffolding reduces the scope for failure during the undertaking of a task, while at the same time encouraging the learner's efforts to advance. Moreover, Bruner (1978) emphasised the social nature of learning to develop skills through the process of scaffolding, noting that "scaffolding refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring". (Bruner, 1978: 19)

Although the literature concerning scaffolding tends to focus on oral errors, teachers can also provide learners with scaffolded feedback on their writing errors, by means of direct or indirect WCF (Nassaji, 2017), with scaffolded WCF optimising L2 learning (Nassaji, 2017). In sociocultural theory, the third important concept consists of regulation, which refers to how individuals manage their learning (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). This regulation from the Sociocultural theory perspective is a process of learning moving from other-regulation to self-regulation (Nassaji, 2017). 'Other' regulation refers to the needs of the learner for support from others, whilst 'self-regulation' refers to the learner's skill to act independently and so become autonomous (Nassaji, 2017).

Based on the definitions above, we can see that this theoretical standpoint is not limited to offer one-time assistance to learners, because it views learning as a systematic process through which different periods of development of individual learners occur. For example, in an EFL writing context, the teacher can assess students and develop their understanding and knowledge regarding peer feedback and involve them in the process of teaching writing to create socialisation and scaffolding. Teachers can also assist through the different types of written corrective feedback provided to the students so that they can develop their new understanding, new concepts, and new knowledge. When students' learning is acquired, teachers then can gradually stop that assistance so that they can write by themselves.

To summarise: in cognitive theories, CF is considered as making a significant contribution to interlanguage development, as it promotes learning by stimulating noticing, including any gaps. However, this current study adopts the sociocultural perspective, considering that there is no single type of effective feedback capable of being studied through a teacher's interaction with his/her students, but rather that

it is effective if tailored to the current developmental stage of the learner. Scaffolding interaction assists learners in producing linguistic features they are unable to handle independently, so enabling them to produce utterances in the target language they would be unable to perform without assistance. This perspective indicates that a specific form of feedback may not prove beneficial for all learners, resulting in differing theories regarding the specific type of CF required.

In the above section, I have introduced the theoretical perspective which I consider the most relevant to the role of WCF in the SLA process. Therefore, the following section presents an overview of key research empirically investigating these perspectives and their associated pedagogical applications to feedback in the teaching of writing.

### **3.6 Empirical Evidence on Feedback in Writing**

In this section, I present the empirical evidence concerning feedback in ESL and EFL writing, which is crucial to determining the gap addressed by this current research. In order to gain a broader insight into the feedback issues within a number of different contexts, I identified the existing empirical literature related to feedback by searching multiple databases (i.e., Education Resources Information Centre (Eric) and Journal Storage (JSTOR)), and journals (i.e., Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Quarterly, English Language Teaching (ELT), and Second Language Writing). In addition, I searched the Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics to highlight similar issues within the EFL context. Moreover, I also searched a Saudi Digital Library (SDL) in order to explore the feedback process within the Saudi context, utilising a number of similar Saudi resources to understand the context under examination.

The literature shows that the empirical studies increased as a response to the theoretical debate between Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1999) concerning the effectiveness of feedback, in which they both raised the issue of the importance of conducting studies to examine the effectiveness of feedback on students writing in the ESL and EFL context. In addition, both agreed that more research is necessary (Ferris, 2004:50). Moreover, further research into the feedback related to errors is required to determine whether this is an acceptable method, before an alternative can be suggested (Ferris, 1999). This debate fuelled the growing interest of second and foreign language researchers in studying several topics in relation to feedback in writing.

The subsequent sections examine these themes based on several empirical studies focusing on the impact of different types of WCF on student writing, along with teachers' beliefs and practice concerning feedback, and students' own responses and preferences.

### 3.6.1 The Effectiveness of Different Types of Feedback in Different Contexts

A number of studies have explored the effectiveness of various types of written feedback in different ESL and EFL contexts. These studies were experimental in nature and included a hypothetical assumption that certain types of feedback (i.e. direct or indirect) would have a positive impact on students' writing accuracy. However, this evidence was neither conclusive nor consistent. Therefore, this section examines the available evidence concerning the effectiveness of different types of feedback within different contexts.

Chandler (2003) employed an experimental design to address the following question: "Does error correction improve accuracy in student writing?" (2003:270).



The students in this study were all music majors, with the goal being to improve their ability when it came to English reading and writing. However, they were required to have either scored between 540 and 575 on the Test of English as a foreign language or completed a year-long intermediate English as a L2 course with grade B or above, after scoring at least 500 in TOEFL. The control group consisted of sixteen students from East Asia, while the experimental group consisted of fifteen similar students, with both having been taught by the same teacher-researcher. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the accuracy of the written work of the students in the experimental group over fourteen weeks, while the members of the control group (who were given no error correction between assignments) demonstrated no improvement.

Ferris (2006) conducted a study with ninety-two ESL students attending a composition class at freshman college level, with three teachers gathering additional evidence on the nature and effects of error feedback in L2 composition writing classes over a period of fifteen weeks. The data was collected through questionnaires, as well as essays from 146 students and interviews with twenty-five students and the three teachers. During the semester, the students completed three draft essays on topics based on assigned reading, with the findings demonstrating that approximately 80% had the ability to successfully correct language errors highlighted by their teachers and make the appropriate revisions. The study found that students showed significant progress in reducing the number of errors, as well as in written accuracy.

A further investigation conducted by Bitchener et al. (2005) focused on the influence of different types of feedback. This study was comprised of fifty-three post-intermediate ESOL (migrant) learners, who had recently entered a post-

intermediate ESOL programme. Nineteen participants received direct WCF and a five-minute student–researcher conference after each piece of writing, with seventeen receiving explicit direct WCF only, and seventeen receiving no CF. For one semester (i.e., sixteen weeks) the students followed a competency-based curriculum to improve their communicative ability in the four macro-skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening). During a twelve-week period, the participants submitted four 250 word written tasks. Direct written feedback took the form of full and explicit corrections above underlined errors, while conference sessions were held to discuss such errors and the corrections, as well as giving the students an opportunity to receive additional explanations and examples. The findings revealed that CF was effective in improving learners' use of articles and the past simple tense, but not when it came to the use of prepositions. The provision of full and explicit written feedback, together with individual conference feedback, resulted in significantly higher levels of accuracy when the past simple tense and the definite article were used in new pieces of writing. This demonstrates that the accuracy of written work can be improved if students are regularly exposed to oral feedback and WCF. However, when the three targeted error categories were considered as a single group, the type of feedback provided did not have a significant impact on accuracy.

Moreover, Bitchener and Knoch (2009b) carried out a ten-month study investigating the influence of three different types of CF on students' writing accuracy. The experiment involved a pre-test, post-test and three delayed post-tests. The subjects consisted of fifty-two low-intermediate ESL students from a university in Auckland, who were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups, each made up of thirteen students. Throughout the experiment, the

students were required to write a total of five compositions describing a given picture. The results were measured by the handling of two functional uses of the English article system (i.e. the definite article 'the' and the indefinite article 'a'). Once each experimental group had received feedback and considered the corrections, an immediate post-test was undertaken in an identical manner to the pre-test, as outlined above. The control group took the post-test immediately after receiving the uncorrected compositions they had created in the pre-test, which were returned one week later. A first delayed post-test was administered in week eight and the compositions were returned one week later. A second delayed post-test was administered after six months, and a final delayed post-test was administered after ten months. All the compositions were subsequently analysed by calculating their level of accuracy based on a percentage of the correct usage of the two articles 'the' and 'a.' Inter-rater reliability calculations revealed a 95% agreement on the identification of targeted errors and a 98% agreement on assigning errors to the targeted categories. Although the three experimental groups outperformed the control group in the use of the articles 'the' and 'a', the study identified no significant difference between the experimental groups. The authors concluded that WCF, accompanied by either an oral or written meta-linguistic explanation, helped students to improve their writing accuracy in the use of 'the' and 'a' over the long-term and that they benefited from CF. However, they failed to identify any significant advantages of one type of feedback.

To summarise: the studies discussed above (i.e. Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2006; Bitchener et al. 2005; Bitchener and Knoch, 2009b) have demonstrated the impact of different types of WCF on students' writing accuracy. Furthermore, a

number of studies in different contexts have examined the impact of direct and indirect feedback on students' writing accuracy, as shown in Table 3-7 .

Table 3-7: The effectiveness of direct and indirect feedback

Study	Participants	Methods	Types of correction	Duration
<b>No significant difference regarding the effect of direct and indirect feedback</b>				
Bitchener and Knoch (2010b)	ESL, advanced L2 writers, university, USA.	A comparison between the impact of four types of feedback on students' writing.  Three treatment groups and a control group.	Group 1: Direct meta-linguistic explanation.  Group 2: Indirect circling.  Group 3: Direct meta-linguistic explanation and oral explanation.  Group 4: Control	Ten weeks
Hosseiny (2014)	Pre-intermediate students in an Iranian EFL institute.	Two experimental groups and one control group.	Focused  Direct feedback group.  Indirect feedback group.  No feedback group.	Five sessions
<b>Indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback</b>				
Ferris and Helt (2000)  Ferris (2006)	Ninety-two advanced ESL learners at a USA university	No control group	A mix of direct, indirect (coded and uncoded); notes (marginal and end-of-text); and text revision.	One semester

Eslami (2014)	Students following low-intermediate EFL courses	Two tests were employed: (1) the Cambridge Preliminary English Test and (2) a writing test package, which included a pre-test, an immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test in order to measure the participants' achievement.	Focused direct correction and indirect feedback.	Twelve weeks
<b>Direct feedback is more effective than indirect feedback</b>				
Alharbi (2020)	Sixty EFL undergraduate English major students having a high level of proficiency.	Two experimental groups and one control group.	Direct, indirect, and minimal WCF.	Thirteen weeks, during which they were asked to write one essay each week.

Some of these studies show no significant differences regarding the impact of these two strategies on the development of the written work of EFL and ESL students (Bitchener & Knoch 2010b; Hosseiny, 2014). On the other hand, a number of studies (e.g., Ferris and Helt, 2000; Eslami, 2014) found indirect feedback to prove more effective than direct feedback, although another very recent study has reported the advantages of direct feedback, highlighting that it demonstrates a more positive impact than indirect feedback (Alharbi, 2020).

This indicates that there is no one correct answer, in particular as studies for or against the benefits of feedback have been conducted with students at different levels and within different contexts. However, it needs to be acknowledged that

students can have various levels of language knowledge due to: (1) individual differences; (2) different teachers; (3) different textbooks; and (4) differing teaching methods and strategies. Thus, applying one claim as to whether the feedback is helpful or harmful is to over-simplify the matter, indicating the need for additional research into the complex process of giving feedback on students' writing, including teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as students' expectations and experiences.

### 3.6.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Regarding Feedback in Students' Writing

The literature concerning teachers' feedback is diverse, with the majority of studies exploring the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices based on qualitative evidence, including analysis of students' written work and interviews with teachers. Two observations stand out from the conclusion of these studies. As shown in Table 3-8 below, the first is that when the data is gathered through teachers' self-reporting, it often provides positive views of the teachers' practice, while the second shows a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices, particularly when observed by researchers. These studies frequently attribute this mismatch to a number of factors, as discussed below.

Table 3-8: Studies relating to teachers' beliefs and practice

The author	The aim of the study	Context and methods and participants	Main findings
<b>Montgomery and Baker (2007)</b>	To examine how teachers provide and self-assess their use of feedback.	Questionnaire with ninety-eight university students (high-level beginners to advanced), and thirteen ESL writing teachers in an English Language institute in the US, as well as Teachers' WCF on seventy-eight texts from six students.	Teachers' practices of giving written feedback were found to differ considerably to their self-reported practices. The teachers were found to focus more than they claimed on language errors in both first and second drafts.
<b>Lee (2008a)</b>	To examine teachers' beliefs and the extent to which these influence their practice.	Written feedback collected from twenty-six EFL secondary school English teachers relating to the written texts of 174 students. Interviews with six of the writing teachers.	The teachers' feedback practices were found to be influenced by many contextual factors.
<b>Lee (2009)</b>	To investigate the EFL beliefs and practices of teachers in Hong Kong and report the extent to which teachers' WCF practices aligned with their beliefs.	174 texts were collected from twenty-six teachers, along with follow-up interviews with seven teachers. Questionnaires were sent to 206 secondary teachers and follow-up interviews undertaken with nineteen of these.	Ten mismatches were found between teachers' beliefs and their practices regarding written feedback.

<b>Evans et al. (2010b)</b>	To determine why teachers chose/did not choose to provide WCF.	A large-scale study of teachers' perspectives concerning WCF. The participants consisted of 1053 English language teachers from sixty-nine countries, with the data collected through an international online survey.	The key findings were that 92% of the teachers reported using WCF in their teaching practices, due to viewing it as beneficial for students.
<b>Ferris et al. (2011b)</b>	To explore the perspectives of college writing teachers when responding to L2 students.	129 writing instructors who usually taught either first-year writing courses, or the developmental or basic writing course. A twenty-five-item online item survey was employed, along with interviews with twenty-three participants and a discussion of written commentary on between three and five of their texts.	ESL teachers were found to value feedback and recognise its importance, although they often felt frustrated and dissatisfied with their feedback practices.
<b>Shulin (2013)</b>	To determine how teachers' beliefs influenced their practice of peer feedback.	Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty-six Chinese EFL teachers of writing to university students.	There was found to be a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding peer feedback.
<b>Ferris (2014)</b>	To investigate teachers' philosophies and practices	The study included an online survey of 129 college and university instructors	The teachers were found to believe that peer feedback consumed much of their



	of peer feedback, conferencing feedback, and written feedback.	from Northern California, along with interviews with twenty-three of these participants and an analysis of their written feedback on their students' written texts.	class time, and that students were incapable of providing valuable feedback. They also stated that conferencing was impractical, due to a lack of time. However, they applied written feedback directed by the students' needs.
<b>Alshahrani and Storch (2014)</b>	To examine teachers' WCF practices in relation to institutional guidelines, along with their own beliefs concerning the most effective forms of WCF.	The participants of the study were three EFL writing teachers for EFL Saudi university students. Data included feedback given by three teachers on their students' writing (i.e. fifteen students for each teacher), along with follow-up interviews with the teachers.	The study found that, although the teachers followed the strict guidelines and provided comprehensive indirect feedback, these practices did not always accord with their beliefs.
<b>Al-bakri (2015)</b>	To explore EFL teachers' beliefs and practices when providing students with WCF and to investigate whether their beliefs and stated practices matched with their actual practices.	An exploratory case study with six teachers of academic writing for EFL Omani college students.  Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, along with	The teachers were found not always to be able to give WCF that matched their beliefs.

		an examination of the written assignments of eighteen students.	
<b>Junqueira and Payant (2015)</b>	To explore the beliefs and practices of feedback relating to ESL writing teachers.	A reflective journal, two semi-structured interviews, analysis of the teacher's written comments, and a member-checking meeting with the teacher after the data had been analysed.	A number of discrepancies were identified between the teacher's beliefs and practice regarding the focus and the type of feedback.
<b>Rajab et al. (2016)</b>	To explore EFL teachers' views and practices when it came to WCF in the Saudi context.	An exploratory interpretive case using a mixed-methods approach. 184 EFL writing teachers responded to an online survey, while open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were used with seven EFL teachers.	All the participants were found to believe that WCF is vital for improving writing and preferred the use of indirect coded WCF, followed by selective and comprehensive WCF. No significant differences were identified between teachers' views and practices.
<b>Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıklanlı, (2019)</b>	To investigate EFL teachers' beliefs concerning WCF and whether they were similar to their own practices.	The written texts of 175 randomly chosen EFL students corrected by the same teachers. A questionnaire was administered to twenty-five English	The findings identified some mismatches in the teachers' beliefs (as stated in the questionnaire and interviews) compared with the analysis of their WCF practices in students' written texts.

		teachers and interviews undertaken with five teachers.	
<b>Mao and Crosthwaite (2019)</b>	To investigate the match and mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their practice of WCF.	Five EFL writing teachers, and 100 second year non-English major students. A questionnaire and interview with five English writing teachers in a Chinese EFL context. 100 student essays provided with WCF by the five teachers.	Most of the teachers were found to believe that they primarily provided direct feedback, although they practised indirect feedback. The teachers also believed that they often wrote marginal correction, despite never doing so in practice. In addition, they believed that they mainly provided WCF in relation to content and organisation, while their practice showed that language errors received more correction.

The above review of research studies about teachers' beliefs and practices of feedback has generated valuable findings regarding the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices of feedback in writing classrooms and the factors that hinder teachers from practising their beliefs about feedback.

The first factor concerns contextually related aspects. For instance, the impact of the examination culture was reported by the majority of Lee's (2008a; 2009) participants, who attributed this mismatch between their WCF beliefs and practices to the fact that the focus of their feedback was guided by the examination. A further three related contextual factors consisted of: firstly, time limitations; secondly, the need to cover the textbooks; and thirdly, heavy teaching loads (Rajab et al., 2016). Teachers in Al-bakri's (2015) study also reported that they were unable to re-check students' drafts, indicating that this was due to a lack of time. Lee (2008a:69) claimed that:

Teachers' feedback practices are influenced by a myriad of contextual factors including teachers' beliefs, values, understandings, and knowledge, which are mediated by the cultural and institutional contexts, such as philosophies about feedback and attitude to exams, and socio-political issues pertaining to power and teacher autonomy. (Lee, 2008a:69)

The second factor concerns teacher related aspects (i.e., subject knowledge), as reported by Shulin (2013). He also noted that teachers may not be aware of the potential value of peer feedback, resulting in students being prevented from engaging in, and benefiting from, peer interactions in writing. In addition, Shulin (2013) and Ferris (2014) found that the practical experience of teachers regarding the focus and types of feedback tended to influence their practice. Furthermore, Al-bakri (2015) identified the impact of teachers' educational beliefs on their WCF practices. Moreover, Evans et al. (2010) reinforced the global use of WCF by teachers, based

on their belief that students both needed and expected such feedback, and its use was justified by L2 acquisition theories. However, Ferris et al. (2011: 223) concluded that the challenges faced by teachers when responding to L2 writers indicates the “need for changes in teacher preparation programmes, in hiring practices, and in in-service support and supervision”. This view was supported by Lee (2009), who stated that teachers need further training and empowerment to remain innovative in their provision, thus enabling them to deal with factors influencing their feedback practice such as their educational beliefs and teaching and learning background.

The third factor included a number of further aspects influencing teachers’ beliefs and their practices which are related to students. These included students’ level of proficiency, which, as noted by Ferris (2014), has been found to influence how teachers respond when giving feedback. For example, the teacher in Ferris’ (2014) study was found to give positive comments exclusively to students at a higher level, while giving directive, mechanical, and negative comments to low-level students. The teachers in the studies of Lee (2008c) and Junqueira and Payant (2015) reported similar reasons for the discrepancy between their beliefs and practices regarding the focus of their feedback. Thus, most noted that their focus was directed by their students’ level of proficiency, as well as their needs. The studies found a discrepancy between teachers’ beliefs and practices in the type of feedback given in both the EFL context (e.g., Shulin, 2013) and the ESL context (e.g., Ferris, 2014), as well as a failure to apply peer feedback due to a belief that students are unqualified to provide valuable feedback to their peers.

The findings from these studies indicate that teachers’ beliefs and practices related to feedback tend to be influenced by several factors, which can differ in response to different contexts. These factors are classified into three major groups:

(1) contextually related factors; (2) teacher-related factors; and (3) student-related factors. Contextually speaking, despite a number of studies on WCF conducted in various ESL/EFL contexts, this area of research remains somewhat unexplored in the Saudi university context. This indicates the need for the current study to be undertaken to fill the gap in the existing literature, in particular by obtaining an in-depth insight into this specific context.

The majority of the above studies have attempted to address one or more issues related to teachers' beliefs and practices, but have focussed only on WCF (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Al-bakri, 2015; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019), while a small number examined the issue of peer feedback or oral conference feedback (Shulin, 2013; Ferris, 2014). However, this current study aims to focus on teachers' beliefs concerning the process of giving feedback on academic writing. Studies concerning teachers' beliefs and practices of feedback in writing classrooms in a variety of contexts, particularly in the KSA, remains limited, indicating the need for more studies, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon (Lee, 2008a; Ferris et al, 2011; Ferris, 2014; Junqueira and Payant, 2015). Therefore, this current study intends to contribute to this area.

Methodologically speaking, the majority of the studies reviewed above employed fixed designs, which aimed to test hypothetical questions in relation to teachers' practices and beliefs related to giving feedback. The only exception is Al-bakri (2015), who employed qualitative methods to generate data concerning teachers' beliefs in relation to WCF in the Omani context, as well as the reasons for their practice.

Therefore, the gaps in the literature concerning the process of giving feedback in the Saudi context highlight the need for further qualitative studies to generate a nuanced understanding of this process. Hence, this current study focuses on developing an intensive and holistic picture, including a consideration of the particulars of each process of awarding feedback.

### 3.6.3 Students' Experiences of Feedback in English Writing

As well as reflecting on previous research into teachers' beliefs and practices, it is vital for this study to consider the nature of students' experiences in many contexts. When it comes to giving feedback on writing, several researchers, including Hyland (2003) and Storch (2010), have asserted the importance of studying the attitudes and experiences of L2 learners. The review of the academic literature highlighted considerable interest in the experiences of students in relation to feedback in English writing, in both ESL and EFL contexts. The majority of such studies employed quantitative and mixed methods to investigate the student experiences of receiving feedback, while focusing on either: (1) the preferences and perceptions of students or (2) their responses and challenges when confronted with different types of feedback.

#### 3.6.3.1 Studies of Students' Preferences of Feedback on Writing

Classic studies regarding the value of feedback from the student perspective have generally employed surveys of ESL students. For instance, Leki (1991) investigated students' attitudes towards their writing errors, and their opinions concerning the most effective ways for teachers to give error feedback. The study was conducted using a survey with 100 ESL students in a freshman composition classes. The students demonstrated considerable interest in the identification of their errors, while also revealing that they preferred to be given comprehensive correction, with

67% preferring their teacher to correct their errors in an explicit manner. In addition, Ferris (1995b) investigated the attitudes, preferences and reactions to multiple feedback from teachers on written drafts. The study employed a survey of 155 ESL college students in a US university following a composition programme. Similar to Leki (1991), the study found that students valued their teachers' feedback as helpful for improving their writing. They also reported that they benefited from their teachers' WCF and showed a preference for feedback focusing on language form, as well as a mixture of praise and constructive criticism.

In more recent studies, researchers have continued to focus on students' experiences of feedback in English writing, including using a survey method to measure attitudes and preferences. For example, Diab (2005) explored students' opinions of WCF by recruiting 156 EFL university students enrolled in English language courses at the American University of Beirut and employing a modified version of Leki's (1991) instrument ('Survey of ESL Students' Preferences for Error Correction'). The findings of this study were similar to previous research, in that most students were found to value the feedback they received on their written texts from their teacher. Similarly, the students preferred their teachers' WCF to focus on: firstly, language form; secondly, organisation; thirdly, the ideas expressed in the text; and fourthly, the writing style. Furthermore, the students preferred their teacher to correct all of their errors, with most demonstrating a preference for the correction technique that gives hints for the first draft and indirect feedback for the final draft.

Researchers have recently begun to employ mixed methods to research students' attitudes and preferences concerning feedback on their English writing. For example, Srichanyachon (2012) studied the attitudes of 174 EFL undergraduate students enrolled in English course, which lasted fourteen weeks, towards two types



of feedback (i.e. peer and teacher), using a survey and interviews with eighteen students. The students were asked to read and offer written feedback on their partners' written work, while the teacher wrote feedback on the scripts and provided oral feedback. The findings from the analysis of the questionnaire and the interview data revealed that these students preferred the feedback from their teacher to that from their peers. The findings from the interviews identified the major disadvantages of peer feedback as including a lack of language knowledge and confidence in giving comments and suggestions. The students regarded teacher feedback as the most successful revision method, due to their confidence in their teacher's knowledge and skills in English.

Nguyen and Ramnath (2016) also explored students' reaction to written teacher feedback using a mixed methods approach, including a questionnaire and group discussion. The participants were second-year English-major university students in the Vietnamese context. The compositions of fifty participants were given feedback from the teachers, while the students also answered questionnaires (with ten out of fifty being randomly chosen) for group discussions of their reaction to the teachers' written feedback. The findings indicated that 90% of the students considered their teachers' feedback to be legible, and 70% understood the teachers' written feedback, while 30% indicated that they understood most of the comments. The group discussion revealed that all of the students felt their teachers did not offer sufficiently clear explanations to enable students to understand their errors when it came their choice of vocabulary. The discussion revealed that students reported that teachers did not understand their ideas and failed to correct spelling and grammar errors, which had left them to assume that their spelling and grammar were correct.

A further example of a mixed method study in the EFL context is that of Chen et al. (2016), which investigated learners' perceptions and preferences when it came to written feedback in an EFL setting. The study included sixty-four intermediate, advanced-intermediate, and advanced EFL English learners, who were majoring in English and in their third year at a university in Mainland China. Quantitative data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire, while the qualitative data was generated using open-ended questions. The students expressed a favourable attitude towards the correction of their errors, but also held a strong preference for lengthy written commentaries on the content and grammar of their texts. The qualitative data demonstrated that participants desired to be more independent during the revision process, with less interference from their teachers. In general, the findings confirmed that the EFL learners tended to value WCF.

This subject has also been investigated using qualitative methods, including a study by Diab (2005), who examined EFL university students' beliefs concerning various types of WCF, as well as comparing these beliefs with those of their instructors. This involved a case study of ESL instructors, who is a native speaker of English teaching English as a foreign language, and two EFL students, who were studying English as a medium of instruction at the university. Two students were selected to be interviewed on randomly chosen assignments following feedback. Data was collected through asking an instructor to mark two randomly drafts of an essay assignment and to think aloud while she performs the marking. These think-aloud protocols were followed by semi-structured interview, which was held with the instructor two days after the marking task to explore her preferences for feedback techniques and the rationale behind her feedback strategies. Another semi-structured interviews were conducted with two students in the instructor's class to examine their

beliefs about learning to write and their perspectives on what kind of feedback they considered beneficial. Both of these participants viewed their teachers' feedback as essential but expressed different opinions concerning the types they found beneficial, i.e., while one student found all comments to be important, the other preferred to receive more detailed written commentaries, in order to understand what she should do, and what she was currently doing wrong. One conflict between the beliefs of the students and their instructors found in this study was that the latter believed in offering minimal feedback in final drafts, due to believing that students would not pay as much attention as in the earlier drafts. However, one of the students reported that they would prefer to receive detailed feedback, even for the final draft.

A further example of a qualitative study was conducted by Mustafa (2012) to capture the opinions of Saudi students concerning feedback. This employed informal unstructured and semi-structured individual interviews with Saudi students in a private ESL writing classroom in Canada. The students held predominantly negative attitudes regarding the efficacy of feedback, with all of the interviewees indicating that the feedback they received failed to improve their writing skills, or give them any new knowledge. The responses revealed the students' discontent about the feedback they were given in terms of efficacy and practices, which they viewed as failing to help them achieve their long-term aims, as they consisted of simply underlining and/or labelling errors. Generally, the students preferred direct feedback, with the findings revealing that they were only learning to recognise that an error had been made.

This section has demonstrated that, although the majority of studies reviewed for this research drew on a variety of methods, they reached identical conclusions regarding the value students placed on the feedback received on their English written texts in the ESL and EFL university contexts (Leki, 1991; Ferris, 1995b; Diab, 2005;

Srichanyachon, 2012; Nguyen and Ramnath; 2016; Chen et al., 2016). However, it is significant that there remains very little research featuring corrected students' texts along with interviews, which could assist in gaining insights into students' preferences in terms of their teachers' practice when it comes to written feedback.

### 3.6.3.2 Students' Responses to Teachers' Feedback

Several researchers in the ESL and EFL contexts examined students' responses to teachers' feedback, while also considering learners' potential challenges when reading and/or responding to written feedback. These researchers collected qualitative data, with the exception of Chiang (2004), who conducted a study with EFL secondary school learners, using a questionnaire and interviews with three participants to examine students' responses to teacher feedback.

Chiang (2004) concluded that:

Learners "did not understand the correction codes and symbols..., they did not agree with their teacher comments... students had difficulties understanding their teacher's handwriting ..., students did not understand their teacher's comments about ideas and organisation". (Chiang, 2004: 104)

A further finding related to difficulties concerning teacher feedback was reported by Mustafa (2012), who employed informal unstructured and semi-structured individual interviews with Saudi students in a private ESL writing classroom in Canada, reporting predominantly negative responses regarding indirect feedback, with all student interviewees indicating that they did not believe this improved their written skills or allow them to acquire any new knowledge. The findings demonstrate that they both failed to understand, and also criticised, the type of feedback they received, i.e., indirect and error codes. This indicates that learners can encounter difficulties in understanding some teachers' written feedback, which may relate to individual

practices. However, I believe that these two studies could have proved more robust if they had included a sample of teachers' written feedback, so enabling readers to gain an enhanced understanding of the teachers' method of providing feedback. Moreover, this would have enabled readers to understand in more depth why students reported such negative attitudes towards the written feedback provided by their teachers.

The current study will therefore fill this gap in the literature by including the students' written texts, as well as their teachers' written feedback, hence leading to a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the challenges experienced by students in understanding such feedback.

A recent study of students' responses to feedback on their writing was conducted by Mahfoodh, (2017), to examine the emotional response of EFL university students to their teachers' written feedback. Data collection for this study includes first students' think-aloud protocols while referring to the first commented-on drafts, they were informed to focus on their reactions to teacher written feedback they were reading. Second, students' written texts, and third, semi-structured interviews, with the findings demonstrating that the EFL university students preferred to receive feedback from their teachers more than other sources of feedback (i.e., peer feedback and teacher-student conferencing). However, there was a varied range of emotional responses to the teachers' written feedback, including: (1) acceptance; (2) rejection; (3) surprise; (4) happiness; (5) dissatisfaction; (6) disappointment; (7) frustration; and (8) satisfaction.

However, none of these studies investigated students' prior expectations of feedback, or their subsequent responses. Therefore, the current study aims to cover the expectations of students when it comes to their teachers' feedback on their written

texts, as well as their experiences of such feedback. This will be vital for obtaining an improved understanding of how teachers' practice shapes students' preferences and responses. Additionally, such feedback, when used as a stimulus for interviews, can help provide insights into this phenomenon from various perspectives.

#### 3.6.4 Studies Comparing Students' and Teachers' Preferences and Beliefs about WCF

In addition to the empirical studies reviewed above (which focused either on firstly, teachers' beliefs and/or their practices of giving feedback on written work, or secondly, students' preferences and beliefs concerning such feedback), there is also a body of literature focusing on comparing the preferences and beliefs of teachers and students. These studies have been conducted in both ESL and EFL contexts, employing either quantitative or mixed methods. Unlike the evidence discussed above, these studies demonstrated consistency in terms of the conflict between teachers' beliefs and those of their students, in terms of considerable discrepancies regarding the focus of feedback. A further discrepancy was found in relation to the type of WCF employed, with teachers showing a preference for indirect feedback with metalinguistic comments, while students tended to prefer direct feedback accompanied by a metalinguistic comment. When it came to the amount of feedback employed, some studies showed similar practices, with students preferring the comprehensive approach (e.g., Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010) while other studies (e.g., Hamouda, 2011) revealed the opposite for the amount of WCF. Thus, while most students preferred receiving feedback in a comprehensive manner, their teachers believed that they should adopt a selective approach. Therefore, these studies showed that students and teachers agree on some aspects of feedback, with some discrepancies regarding a number of other aspects.

One example of these studies is the research conducted by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), who compared teachers' beliefs and students' preferences towards WCF using questionnaires administered to thirty-three ESL students and thirty-one ESL teachers at two different private English language schools in Canada. The findings revealed that both students and teachers shared beliefs concerning the appropriate amount of WCF, believing that it is beneficial for teachers to provide feedback on as many errors as possible. However, they disagreed when it came to the focus of WCF, with the students showing a preference for various aspects in writing, while most teachers preferred to attend to language form.

Another example of a quantitative study was conducted by Hamouda (2011) in a Saudi university EFL context, investigating students' and teachers' preferences when it came to written error correction in relation to a course in Effective Academic Writing. The study included 200 EFL undergraduates who were native speakers of Arabic and twenty teachers. The author employed a questionnaire to measure the preferences of both students and teachers, as well as their attitudes to feedback in English writing. The students preferred teachers to give them comprehensive feedback that was direct and/or took the form of statement commentaries, while teachers preferred to use the error codes technique. This study also revealed a discrepancy between teachers and students' preferences when it came to the focus and source of feedback.

A further important point arising from the review of these studies concerns the absence of qualitative studies taking a holistic approach to enhancing an understanding of the process of feedback from the perspectives of teachers and students. The use of different data sets (i.e. students' texts provided with teachers'

feedback and interviews with students and teachers) is crucial to an understanding of such aspects, which is the focus of the current study.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The studies in this review have revealed the current lack of qualitative studies, particularly in an Arab context, examining: (1) the process of giving feedback; (2) teachers' beliefs and understandings; and (3) students' expectations and experiences relating to WCF (Mahfoodh, 2011). A number of previous studies into teachers' written feedback in EFL contexts (e.g., Leki, 1991; Chiang, 2004; Diab, 2005a; Hamouda, 2011) have employed a survey design, using questionnaires for data collection to explore students' experiences of teachers' WCF. However, this current study employs a qualitative case study design using semi-structured interviews to assess students' expectations and experiences. Moreover, I consider that surveys are unable to probe deeply into teachers' and students' thinking when it comes to teachers' beliefs in relation to WCF as stated by Lee (2004), while questionnaires may prove inadequate for capturing the complexity of teachers' beliefs as claimed by Borg (2006).

Therefore, this current study aims to generate qualitative data to provide further insights into the feedback process in an EFL context. It also includes an exploration of students' perceptions and engagement in the process of feedback, which Hyland (2010:177) highlighted as "deserv(ing) further investigation through qualitative studies". In addition, it identifies potential factors impacting on learners receiving CF on their writing, along with their previous experiences of CF. Furthermore, this study employs interviews to facilitate learners' reflections on their knowledge of errors and the strategies they use when responding to feedback.



Additionally, this review has highlighted a lack of focus on context, in particular the Saudi context. To the best of my knowledge, those studies conducted in the Saudi context have focused on either students or teachers, or have lacked any investigation of students' written texts (i.e., Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Hamouda, 2011; Mustafa, 2012; Mahfoodh, 2011). Although several studies of WCF have been conducted in differing ESL/EFL contexts, this area of research remains less explored in the Saudi university context. Only a small number of studies, such as that of Rajab et al. (2016), have been conducted in Saudi Arabia and provided actual examples of feedback from English writing teachers or investigated the extent to which these practices were aligned with teachers' own beliefs and students' preferences. Hence, the current study addresses this research gap in the Saudi Arabian university context.

Most of the existing studies have attempted to tackle one or more issues related to teacher beliefs and practices by targeting only WCF (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Al-bakri, 2015; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019) while few have concentrated on peer feedback or oral conference feedback, apart from Shulin (2013) and Ferris (2014). Therefore, my own study covers teachers' beliefs and understandings towards different types of feedback on academic writing. Moreover, most of these studies refer to the limited attention given to teachers' beliefs and practices when it comes to feedback in writing classrooms, so indicating the need for further research required in differing contexts, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon (Lee, 2008a; Ferris et al, 2011; Ferris, 2014; Junqueira and Payant, 2015).

In addition, several authors who have previously discussed existing research into responses to student writing in general, and WCF in particular, have called for more attention to be paid to individual student responses (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010).

Therefore, in order to address the identified gaps in the research, the current study does not only discuss EFL English major students' responses, but also explores students' expectations, preferences and experiences of different types of feedback on their academic writing. Specifically, it considers forms of error correction (i.e. direct, indirect, and written commentary), peer feedback and student-teacher conferences. Moreover, this study explores factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practices of feedback in an EFL university context by means of interviews. It also explores teachers' practices as discussed in the students' interviews and written coursework, in addition to the interviews with teachers. I believe that the triangulation of the data generated through these methods can provide a holistic view of teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

To conclude, this review of previous research has informed and shaped the aims and design of the current study. A common recommendation made in previous studies is the need for greater emphasis on exploring the nature of feedback in an EFL context and teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as students' perspectives towards the feedback provided by their teachers. This study is unique in comparison to the research discussed above in that it includes EFL writing teachers with their EFL English major students and written texts provided with teacher written feedback.

The research questions guiding the design of this study are the following:

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at Prince University?
2. What is the understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?
3. What are the EFL students' expectations of their teachers' feedback?
4. What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the research framework (Section 4.2) which includes the educational research paradigm, theoretical assumptions, and the methodology used in this study is discussed and justified. Participants and recruitment strategies are presented in Section 4.3. In addition, the instruments used in data collection Section 4.4, which are semi-structured interviews, and students' written coursework plus participants' information are illustrated. Moreover, Section 4.5 presents the procedure of the data collection which includes the process of inviting participants, interview protocol, and my role as a reflexive researcher is also presented. After presenting how the data was collected, Section 4.6 illustrate how the data was analysed. This chapter also considered the quality of the research in Section 4.7 and ethical considerations in Section 4.8. The chapter concludes with the challenges and limitations Section 4.9 that I experienced during the data collection.

### 4.2 Research Framework

To achieve the objectives and answer the research questions I introduce the framework used in the current research. Creswell's (2014) framework is used to illustrate the relationship between the four components discussed in this section which are research approach, research philosophy, methodology and methods. Figure 2-1 below shows the framework of the current study.

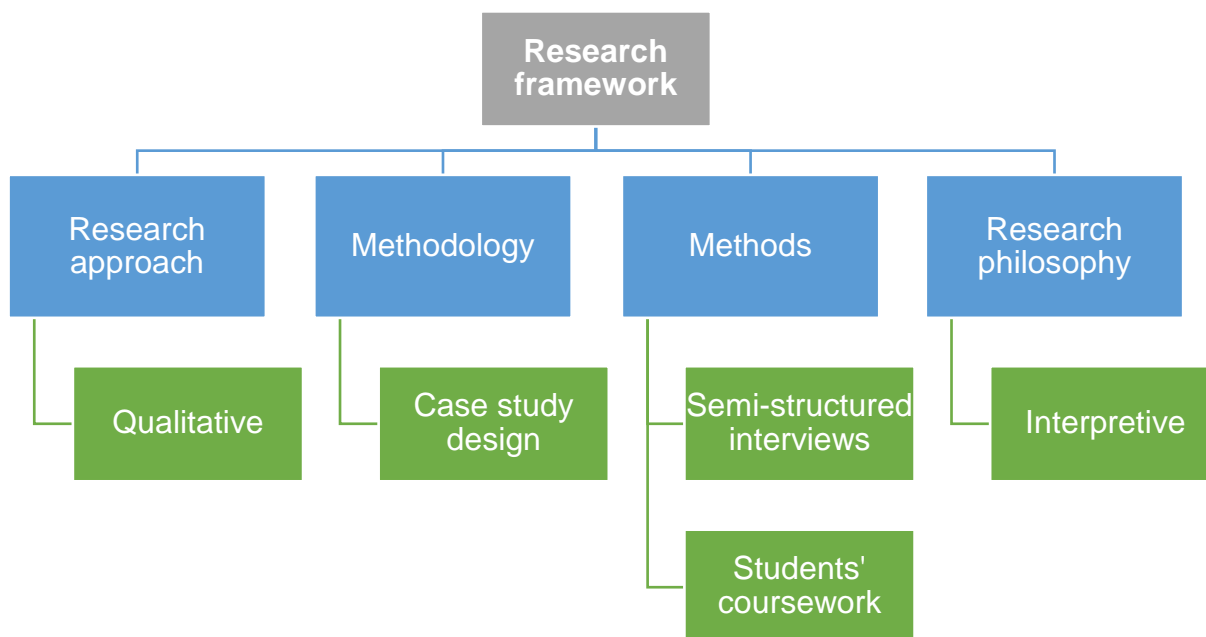


Figure 4-1: Research framework, adapted from Creswell (2014)

This research is framed on the basis of my ontological and epistemological worldview that there is no best paradigm. In order to understand the phenomenon of this current study, I adopted the interpretivist paradigm in order to convey the realities explored in this study. I employed a case study design to answer the research questions. I used qualitative methods for the data collection and analysis in this research. In the following sub-sections, each component of the current research framework, presented in the figure above, is discussed in detail.

#### 4.2.1 Paradigm in Educational Research

Paradigm in educational research is a common term used in social science research, which Guba and Lincoln (1994:107) define as “a set of basic belief systems ... based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions”. Creswell (2003:6) also refers to the term ‘paradigm’ as the philosophical assumptions, which are ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Willis (2007:8) states that a paradigm is “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field”. Therefore, it is a perspective about research based on a set of assumptions, beliefs and/or concepts. This can help to highlight several factors, which are the researcher’s position towards the nature of his/her awareness and understanding and secondly, ‘how’ and ‘what’ knowledge obtained is observed and explored (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011).

Educational researchers may have different beliefs about the nature of reality; these beliefs are classified into two paradigms which are positivist and interpretive. Positivism and interpretivism are the two different theoretical stances that reflect the way of looking at and interpreting social reality (Cohen et al., 2000). Positivist researchers do not consider themselves as significant variables in their research, because they do not directly engage with participants and/or interpret their meanings. They instead claim to investigate reality as it is. This scientific research paradigm (positivism) attempts to "investigate, confirm and predict law-like patterns of behaviour" (Taylor & Medina, 2011:2). It is commonly used to test theories or hypotheses, particularly in natural, physical and social sciences. It is likely to be used when the size of the sample is large, where such a paradigm is mainly depends on “the objectivity of the research process” (Creswell, 2008:2). Positivism, furthermore, involves quantitative methodology, utilising experimental methods that require researchers to be external to the research site. Therefore, as my research involves people in a real context, the positivist paradigm would have been unsuitable for this current study.

As stated by Cohen et al. (2011: 7):

Positivism [scientific paradigm] is less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human nature and the

elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world. This point is nowhere more apparent than in the contexts of classroom and school where the problems of teaching, learning and human interaction present the positivistic researcher with a mammoth challenge.

Although I have not adopted a positive paradigm, it is useful to introduce its characteristics in order to highlight how it contrasts with my choice of paradigm. The following section presents my viewpoint as a contrast to the positivist paradigm. Since my study aims to investigate a phenomenon by exploring reality from the participants' view and seeks to understand how teachers perceive and provide feedback and how EFL students experience feedback in their writing, its philosophical underpinnings are consistent with the interpretive paradigm.

According to Creswell (2007), the interpretive paradigm aids researchers to understand and interpret participants' responses in regard to the issues explored and investigated. However, findings obtained from following such a paradigm are usually difficult to generalise. Instead, they are used to explore reality which is dependent on the participants' views, experiences and perceptions that are collected via data collection methods such as interviews (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the interpretive paradigm enabled me to understand the phenomena more deeply and gave intensive knowledge about the context I studied. The theoretical stance of the interpretive paradigm, as explained by Beck (1979, cited in Cohen et al., 2000: 20) is as follows:

to understand social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality. Since the social sciences cannot penetrate to what lies behind social sciences, they must work directly with man's definitions of reality and with the rules he devises for coping

with it. While the social sciences do not reveal ultimate truth, they do help us to make sense of our world. What social science offers is explanation, clarification and demystification of the social forms which man has created around himself.

Therefore, the purpose of interpretive research is achieved in my study by developing knowledge when I described and interpreted the phenomena of the context and attempted to share meaning with others. Hammersley (2013:26) also states that interpretive researchers should discover human experience “from the inside” rather than “the outside”. In other words, interpretive research helped me to position myself as an insider in the study to investigate the nature of how teachers perceive and provide feedback and how EFL students experience feedback in depth. Furthermore, interpretive research is distinguished by its flexibility and potential to examine the complexity of a constructed reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This allowed me to produce substantial contextualised information of the phenomenon studied, while at the same time reflecting the rigour of interpretive research. Hence, the adoption of the interpretive paradigm is compatible with the aims and objectives of my study.

In short, the interpretive paradigm can be summarised as follows. It helps to study individuals, small-scale research, and human actions continuously. It also involves understanding an individual’s actions and meanings. Therefore, in this study, I followed such a paradigm, in order to understand the phenomenon deeper and be an insider by collecting the data in person and engaging with the participants. This resulted in interpretive philosophical assumptions being considered the most appropriate to inform the methodology and designs of this study.



## 4.2.2 Theoretical Assumptions

According to Willis (2007: 194), “different people and different groups have different perceptions of the world”, Based on such a claim, reality may not seem singular. Thus, knowledge may be obtained via different paths; hence there may be multiple paths to the same type of knowledge. A researcher’s interpretation of one phenomenon may therefore differ from that of another’s, even if the phenomenon is the same. This may be due to how this researcher views such a phenomenon, or to the data collected by the researcher to construct their interpretation.

Since this study is interpretive in nature, it seems crucial to define qualitative research. Qualitative research, according to Bryman (2012:379), is “a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. Thus, my study seeks to investigate the phenomena which are the nature of how teachers perceive and provide feedback and how EFL students experience feedback, through semi-structured interviews and WCF on students’ written texts. Details of the tools used in my study are presented in the Methods section. In qualitative research, researchers need to illustrate how to achieve and acquire knowledge by means of identifying their ontology, epistemology, and methodology. As described by Hammersley (2013:21), these three elements are “philosophical ideas that have shaped the practice and development of qualitative research [and] they continue to do so”.

### 4.2.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

Ontology and epistemology are seen to be interrelated, and, to some extent, dependent on each other. They can both lead to a particular methodology, where the appropriate methods fit for the research purposes can be defined according to the researcher’s belief and understanding of both ontology and epistemology (Braun and

Clarke, 2013: 31). It is essential, therefore, to identify the ontological and epistemological stance of this research that led to the choice of the methodology and methods in the study.

Ontology is defined by Crotty (1998:10) as “the study of being”, meaning that reality is reported by the participants or observed in the field, but reality may not always be consistent. Onwuegbuzie (2000) also states that research is influenced by the investigators, where interpretivists believe that the interpretations of all researchers are valid since there are multiple realities. Lather (2006), in addition, states that reality reported by researchers is what they have understood about the contexts. Furthermore, Patton (2002) recommends that researchers should be aware of the cultural and linguistic structures, as reality may be shaped and developed based on them.

Ontology has different assumptions which are realism and relativism. The former refers to the “view that there is a reality, a world, which exists independent of the researcher, and which is to be discovered” (Pring, 2000:59). It is related to the scientific paradigm of positivism which views the world in terms of causes and effects. On the other hand, the latter is the assumption that relates to interpretivism. It sees reality as “socially constructed” and the more social constructions, the more “multiple realities” there are (Pring, 2000: 60), which this study followed in order to explore reality. The ontological assumption of this study is that EFL teachers and EFL university students relate their own beliefs, experiences, and opinions to feedback in writing. Therefore, my role as researcher is to interpret the meanings of the EFL teachers and students in order to give meaning and a comprehensive interpretation to the phenomenon (Crotty, 1998).

This research takes the stance of the relativist that multiple realities exist based on the participants' minds and beliefs. Therefore, the perceived reality is also as varied as who has participated in this study, and the context in which this study was conducted. Perceived reality is constructed based on my understanding as a researcher and portrays social settings or events (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015:17). In other words, phenomena can be seen to vary with the interaction of each participant with reality and how they see and believe it. This, therefore, can lead to subjective knowledge which could consist of various interpretations, but for one single phenomenon, which can simultaneously represent and determine the research epistemology.

Epistemology, which Crotty (1998:8) describes as “how we know what we know”, refers to the philosophical assumptions behind the decisions we make about a phenomenon. Crotty (1998:9) also states that knowledge we present about a phenomenon is not “discovered but constructed”, which can only be obtained through interaction. This means that such knowledge is constructed upon the interpretations of the researcher based on what they collect, see or notice, which may differ from one researcher to another. It also seems that researchers need to consider how to communicate with other humans and discover relations between the selected factors in the world. Therefore, a researcher's values and background cannot be independent and separated from facts of knowledge (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015:18). The interpretive approach, as a result, facilitated my interaction with my participants to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon investigated in this study.

Epistemological assumptions have different research paradigms; the first one is objectivism which is aligned with the scientific paradigm and leads to a variety of methodologies such as experimental research and survey research (Crotty, 1998). The second one is constructivism, which is equivalent to the interpretive approach, which identifies something in its context. This assumption rejects objectivism and supposes that meaning comes when we engage with the realities in our world. Thus, we construct meaning rather than discover it (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, my study follows this type of epistemology as it is qualitative in nature. I, therefore, adopted a subjectivist-constructivist epistemological stance, in which knowledge is gained and constructed through interaction. This was due to the assumption that communication would enable me to gain access to participants' actions, experiences, and interpretations. As mentioned earlier, this study seeks to understand how teachers perceive and provide feedback in the current context and how the students experienced feedback. I needed to understand why teachers used a specific type of feedback and how students experienced the provided feedback and why some of them found it challenging to benefit from different types of feedback. My adoption of this subjectivist-constructivist epistemological position explains my selection of the methodology for this research, which is presented below.

### 4.2.3 Methodology

Research scholars such as Creswell and Clark (2011) refer to methodology as “the philosophical framework and the fundamental assumptions of research” (p. 4). There are three most common methodologies, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). As has been discussed, the purpose of qualitative research is to understand and explore the meaning and the means by which people

make meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It is thus clear that this study is a qualitative where such a choice is made for several reasons.

First, it provides the opportunity to the participants “to talk about a topic in their own words, free of constraints imposed by fixed response questions that are generally seen in quantitative studies” (Guest et al., 2013: 11). Second, a qualitative methodology is appropriate due to the nature of the research problem which this study aims to investigate, which is the nature of the feedback process in the writing classroom at Prince University in Saudi Arabia and how EFL students experienced the provided feedback and how teachers perceive it. Thus, employing this methodology enabled me to answer the questions that begin with how and/or what, so that an in-depth understanding of the topic, setting, and context can be achieved (Guest et al., 2013). Third, qualitative research is also conducted to discover the phenomenon and obtain more in-depth knowledge about it. The participants were encouraged to share their beliefs and make their voice heard. Fourth, the choice of constructive interpretive methodology allowed me to have an in-depth understanding of the EFL university context, including the teachers’ beliefs and practice of feedback and students’ expectations and experience of the feedback on their coursework. It also allowed me to explore the phenomena, such as feelings and thoughts that are difficult to obtain through conventional research methods. Fifth, qualitative research emphasises the researcher’s responsibility as an active participant in the study (Creswell, 2005). In my research, I was the main instrument in data collection and the interpreter of the data findings. Thus, an ongoing interpretive role of the researcher is prominent in the qualitative study (Stake, 1995).

To conclude, as noted previously, the current research project is informed by interpretive features. This led me to adopt a case study methodology which helps

researchers “understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1998:5). More specifically, this study aimed to use qualitative case study methods to understand and explain how EFL teachers of writing provide feedback and explore their purpose of providing feedback. It also seeks to understand how students experienced feedback in an EFL university context. This case study can investigate “multiple bound systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and report a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007:73). My study, therefore, aims to understand an issue which is feedback on an EFL university context through cases within a bound system. In this study, the matter is investigated through students of two levels (i.e. year three and year four) who were studying academic writing, WCF provided on students’ written coursework, and two EFL teachers.

#### 4.2.3.1 Case Study Design

The case study has been defined from different perspectives held by three prominent methodologists who provide procedures to follow when conducting case study research, namely Robert Yin, Robert Stake and Sharan Merriam. Yin and Stake seek to ensure that the topic of interest is well explored, and that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed (Baxter & Jack, 2008), but the epistemological orientation that they employ are quite different (Yazan, 2015) and are worthy of mention in order to decide which one is appropriate for this study.

First, the case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995: xi). According to Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) case study is epistemologically

constructivist and “there are multiple perspectives or views of the case that need to be represented” (Stake, 1995:108). It is “not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality” (Merriam, 1998:22). In comparison, Yin (2018) conceptualises a case study from a positivist orientation. In the current study, I adopted Stake’s (1995) assumptions of the case study because it concurs completely with those underpinning interpretive research which is closely aligned with the constructivist and interpretivist orientation I have adopted. Stake identifies three types of case study- intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. According to him, if the case is a unique situation, it can be an intrinsic case study. This simply means the case findings have limited transferability. Second, if the case study is to understand a situation or phenomenon, then Stake suggests that the case is instrumental. The final term is the collective case study, which allows the researcher to examine more than one case. In my study, I adopted an instrumental case study. This decision was made with a view to gaining insight into and understanding the phenomenon of feedback practice in EFL university students’ writing. This choice of case played a supportive role in facilitating my understanding of such a phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The case in the current study was then developed through answering questions about what I intended to investigate and analyse such as whether I wanted to “analyse” the individual or whether I wanted to analyse an individual or a programme. These questions helped in determining the case and ensured that it was not too broad (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I followed suggestions made by Stake (1995) that boundaries be put on a case. The boundaries “indicate what will and will not be studied in the scope of the research project” (Baxter & Jack, 2008:547). Suggestions on how to combine a case include time and place (Creswell, 2003); time and activity (Stake, 1995) and definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994 cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008) were

considered in order to narrow the topic and prevent the common drawbacks associated with case study which is the tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study. These boundaries allowed me to scope my study. I have chosen a bounded context which contains two writing classes in an EFL department including specific participants and followed a timeframe for investigating the case which helped me to narrow my study and make it more manageable and relevant to what I am trying to demonstrate. In short, these boundaries enabled me to define the scope of the study and its focus.

I found that using case study supported using multiple data sources as presented in Figure 4-2. These data sources enhanced my understanding of the phenomenon and the credibility of my data by supporting my findings with substantial evidence such as the students' written coursework. Thus, the use of multiple qualitative data methods contributed to the validity of the data obtained from this case study by complementing and triangulating the results (Creswell, 2017).

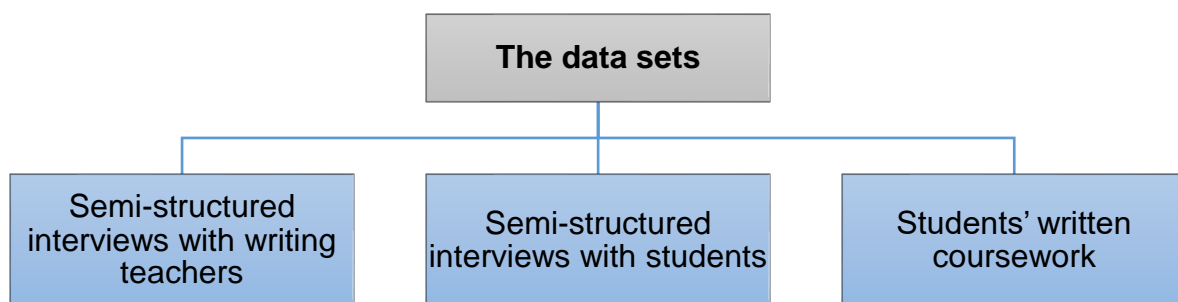


Figure 4-2: The data sets used in the current case study

The case study method seems to be optimal for this study for several reasons. First, according to Cohen et al., (2000) case study helps in investigating cause and effect in a real context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the feedback applied to EFL university students' writing and understand what is going on regarding its cause and effect from claims reported by participants.



Second, Hartley (2004:32) claims that case study research is “a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context”. Therefore, the current study investigates and reports the complex context and illustrates the interaction between people, events, and other factors in the context being studied. Therefore, it helped to explore feedback methods used in the context of teaching academic writing in two different year groups, and to what extent feedback provided by teachers impacts students’ preference, and how they respond to it. Therefore, for my research topic, which is the process of feedback in students’ academic writing, it was appropriate to adopt an instrumental case study approach by collecting data over a period of time. During the semester, this data was collected from teachers’ and students’ interviews and students’ written coursework. Details of data collection procedures are presented in Section 4.5. In this case, I investigated students’ experiences with teachers’ written feedback on their written coursework to find out whether they respond to or ignore the feedback. This helped me to build knowledge of the feedback used in the current context and to discover how students responded to it, and in addition, the teachers’ perception of their choice of feedback.

Third, according to Stake (1995:16), “for instrumental case study, issue is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant”. Therefore, as this current study is an instrumental case study, it helped to provide a broad insight into a particular issue which is the feedback process in an EFL university context. Feedback was studied in the context of teaching academic writing at two different year groups to answer my research questions, which helped to structure my interviews with participants and analyses coursework. Therefore, case study offered a variety of methods that can simplify the data collection that are related to a wide range of research questions that are relevant to the nature of the issue. It helped to find out what is common and what

is specific about the investigated issue. It also allowed a careful and in-depth consideration of the nature of the case, historical background, physical setting, and other institutional and political contextual factors.

Finally, I found that this design facilitates using multiple data sources to understand the phenomenon. Section 4.4 illustrates the choice of data collection methods which are defined as the “range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, explanation and prediction” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:47).

### **4.3 Participants and Recruitment Strategies**

Qualitative research tends to use smaller samples than quantitative (Braun & Clarke, 2013); however, choosing samples is affected by the purpose of the enquiry of the data, what is useful, what we want to know, and what will have credibility (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the sample approach in this study was “purposive” with the aim of generating “insight and in-depth understanding” which involves participants and texts to be able to provide “information-rich” data (Patton, 2002: 230). Convenience sampling was used in this research which is a common approach based on certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at a given time or a willingness to participate (Patton, 2002). The participants in this study were chosen based on the aim of the study, access, convenience, and willingness to participate. The procedure of accessing participant is explained in detail in Section 4.5.2.

### 4.3.1 EFL University Students

In case study research, participants can be an individual, a group such as a family or a classroom of students, or an institution (Cohen et al., 2000). In this study, participants are EFL English language major students who were studying in the third and fourth year of their English bachelor's degree programme. Only third and fourth year students were chosen because they were at the levels where writing with an academic purpose is taught, and written feedback is provided according to the course description presented earlier in Chapter 2 (the context). Three students from each year with different levels of proficiency (i.e., Excellent, Very Good, and Good/High Pass) in academic writing were chosen, whose profiles are presented in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Students' profile

Year	Pseudonym	Outcome of the final exam in the first semester	Level of proficiency
Three	Jodi	92%	Excellent
	Kloud	83%	Very Good
	Lina	74%	Good
Four	Maha	94%	Excellent
	Hana	73%	Good
	Asma	69%	High Pass

Students' overall English level of proficiency in year three and four is equivalent to CEFR A2 and B1, respectively. Choices were determined by the students' English language teachers, due to her knowledge of the students' proficiency level based on the final writing exam outcome of the first semester. Figure 4-3 below shows the marking criteria employed in the current context written in Arabic, and translated in Table 4-2.

## التقديرات ومراتب الشرف

تصعب التقديرات التي يحصل عليها الطالب في كل مقرر كما يلي:

المدلول بالإنجليزية	المدلول بالعربية	النقاط		حدود الدرجة	الرمز الانجليزي	الرمز العربي
Exceptional	ممتاز مرتفع	٤,٠٠	٥,٠٠	٩٥ إلى ١٠٠	A+	+أ
Excellent	ممتاز	٣,٧٥	٤,٧٥	٩٥ أقل من ٩٥	A	أ
Superior	جيد جدا مرتفع	٣,٥٠	٤,٥	٩٠ أقل من ٩٠	B+	+ب
Very Good	جيد جدا	٣,٠٠	٤,٠٠	٨٥ أقل من ٨٥	B	ب
Above Average	جيد مرتفع	٢,٥٠	٣,٥٠	٨٠ أقل من ٨٠	C+	+ج
Good	جيد	٢,٠٠	٣,٠٠	٧٥ أقل من ٧٥	C	ج
High Pass	مقبول مرتفع	١,٥٠	٢,٥٠	٦٥ أقل من ٦٥	D+	+د
Pass	مقبول	١,٠٠	٢,٠٠	٦٥ أقل من ٦٥	D	د
Fail	راسب	٠	١,٠٠	٦٠ أقل من ٦٠	F	هـ
In-Progress	مستمر	-	-	-----	IP	م
In-complete	غير مكتمل	-	-	-----	IC	ل
Denied	محروم	٠	١,٠٠	-----	DN	ح
No grade-Pass	ناجح دون درجة	-	-	٦٠ وأكثر	NP	ند
No grade-Fail	راسب دون درجة	-	-	٦٠ أقل من ٦٠	NF	هد
Withdrawn	منسحب يعذر	-	-	-----	W	ع
Separated Disciplinary	مفصول تأديبي	-	-	-----	PF	هت

Figure 4-3: Marking criteria taken from the website of Prince University

Table 4-2: Translated version of the marking criteria shown in Figure 4-3

Description	Marks	Grade	Points	GPA
Exceptional	95.00 - 100.00	A+	5.00	4.76 – 5.00
Excellent	90.00 - 94.99	A	4.75	4.51 – 4.75
Superior	85.00 - 89.99	B+	4.50	4.01 – 4.50
Very Good	80.00 - 84.99	B	4.00	3.51 – 4.00
Above Average	75.00 - 79.99	C+	3.50	3.01 – 3.50
Good	70.00 - 74.99	C	3.00	2.51 – 3.00
High Pass	65.00 - 69.99	D+	2.50	2.01 – 2.50
Pass	60.00 - 64.99	D	2.00	1.01 – 2.00
Fail	0.00 - 59.99	F	1.00	0.00 – 1.00

Chosen participants for this study had different levels of competence in academic writing in order to obtain different expectations and experiences of their teachers' written feedback at different levels of study. It also helped to show how

students' preferences and responses were influenced after feedback had been given throughout the ten-week semester.

### 4.3.2 EFL Writing Teachers

Two English writing teachers were invited to the interviews. They were currently working at the English Language Department at Prince University and taught the same students who had already participated in the first part of the interviews. They were invited individually to an interview in order to gain different perspectives, knowledge and information on their feedback on students' writing. In other words, teachers' interviews focused on writing criteria and scoring, attitude towards students, how teachers view feedback in terms of improving students' writing, and teachers' purposes in providing feedback. This provided me with the larger picture and an understanding of the topic from different views by teachers and their students in the context. These two teachers were selected purposively by email through the head of department, in order to ensure that they were knowledgeable and capable of providing sufficient amounts of information regarding their writing modules and feedback. The head of department then asked me to meet them in order to discuss the nature of my study and access to the students. Table 4-3 below outlines the teachers' profile.

Table 4-3: Teacher information

Teachers	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Textbook
<b>Sara, teacher (year three)</b>	11 years (five years of teaching writing in the current context)	Master's in English Literature	"Effective Academic Writing" (by Rhonda Liss and Jason Davis, 2012).
<b>Noor, teacher (year four)</b>	12 years (three years of teaching writing in the current context)	Master's in Applied Linguistics	"Effective Academic Writing" (by Alice Savage and Patricia Mayer, 2012)

## 4.4 Data Collection Methods

This section presents in detail the instruments used when collecting the data and justification for using each method is also presented.

### 4.4.1 Interviews

According to Berg (2009:101), interviews are “a conversation with a purpose”, where the purpose is “to gather information”. Interviews are not only a data collection tool that enables us to obtain information, but they also offer a variety of ways to deeply explore interviewees’ experience, knowledge and perspectives of the topic investigated. In other words, they enable participants to express their own views on the issues investigated (Silverman, 2017).

Using interviews in the case study is preferred by Stake (1995), as he states that although observation and interviews are used to find out what happened, what is observed is not controlled by the researcher. In observation, researchers go to the contexts with the hope to find things which happen, whereas in interviews, researchers can cover more and deep information by relying on what different participants have seen. Interviews, moreover, can allow the researcher to obtain historical information about the context from the participants. According to Cohen et al. (2000), interviews have several purposes, such as to evaluate a person or select an employee. However, research interviews have different purposes, as Cohen et al. (2000) state, which can be summarised as follows. First, they can be used to gather information or to observe attitude and obtain opinions to achieve the research objectives. Second, they can be used to test hypotheses or to suggest a new hypothesis. Third, interviews can be used in combination with other methods of research if further information is required. These appear to be the three main purposes of any interviews conducted in research. In my

case, interviews were used to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions, experience and opinions of issues related to feedback in writing and enhancing or clarifying the feedback used in the written texts.

Furthermore, in research concerning writing, Hyland (2015) states that interviews enable interaction and offer flexibility. This enabled me to explore aspects of the writing practices in depth: how writing is taught, and how students write essays. It also helped in investigating how students experience problems in their teachers' feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In addition, there are three types of interviews, namely structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Berg, 2009). Each type has its own tasks and aims. I discuss below these interview types, exploring the aims of each as well as my study choice, the justification for which is explained.

The first type is the "structured interview", where the researcher prepares a set of focused questions to be answered by the participant. The researcher in this type of interview cannot ask questions from outside the prepared list, and the participant will focus only on these pre-prepared questions. The second type is "unstructured" interviews in which the researcher gives maximum flexibility to the participant to speak freely in a friendly atmosphere. The researcher prepares a shortlist of questions only to begin the interview, while any other necessary questions can be addressed to the participant during the interview. The third type is the semi-structured interview which I applied in this study. It is usually applied when the researchers have a clear picture of what topics need covering and what questions need to be answered (Richards, 2009). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) the semi-structured interview is described as "a planned and flexible interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 327). This is akin to the situation in my study, where the topic and the

research questions which I seek answers to are known in the field of EFL writing. In this interview form, the researcher has a set of pre-determined questions to ask the participants, which is similar to the structured interview. However, their sequence may vary from one interview to another, as is the case in an open interview. The researcher can also ask the interviewees sub-questions, known as follow-up questions, used by researchers to probe the conversation to seek further and deeper information and explanations. This type of interview has several advantages, which is why I prefer to apply it in this study. First, it enabled me to compare the participants' responses because of the pre-determined questions used. Second, I was not limited to using only the pre-determined questions. It allowed me to ask follow-up questions to enable participants to illustrate their answers in greater depth and detail. Richards (2009) recommends that researchers applying this interview type follow these suggestions; first, interviewers should keep track of what is being discussed in the interview. This helped me, not to make the mistake of going off-topic. This I did by following the interview guide. Second, researchers should allow sufficient time for participants to answer and not interrupt them, which also allowed me to gain sufficient information from the participants.

I designed three interview schedules, two for students and one for writing teachers. The first student one consisted of twelve questions gathered under five different themes which were developed to elicit students' views, preferences and expectations. The second student one consisted of 19 questions gathered under four different themes and one theme that I had identified during my data collection which were developed to elicit students' experience and feelings towards different types of feedback that they received. The third interview schedule consisted of 19 questions under six different themes to elicit teachers' views, feelings and experiences regarding



their teaching of writing and their actual practice of providing feedback on their students' written coursework.

These interview schedules were developed from the literature on teachers' beliefs and practice of different types of feedback, for example, some questions (i.e., 'What aspect of writing do you focus on when giving feedback? Why do you think this aspect is essential?') were adapted and modified from, for example, Alshahrani and Storch (2014). While some questions that are related to students' preference and experiences were developed from Hamouda's (2011) study and students' responses towards teachers' written feedback questions were developed from the study of Mahfoodh (2017) (see Appendix 2). All these studies were conducted in EFL university contexts which help when identifying the common issues in EFL university writing classrooms.

More importantly, while I developed my interview schedules by drawing on previous researcher's instruments from the literature, I considered the larger research questions of the current study and outlined the broad areas of knowledge that were relevant to answering these questions which was an important factor to shape my interview schedules in addressing these research questions. For example, the questions related to the students' understanding of teachers' written comments. Moreover, some of interview schedules were also developed during the data collection due to the need of further exploration, for example 'Have you tried to correct the errors?'. In the following section, the design of the interviews conducted in this study and piloting interviews are illustrated.

#### 4.4.1.1 Semi-structured interview with students

Before starting to collect the students' writing coursework with their teachers' feedback, the students were interviewed first in order to gain information about their expectations in line with research question three (What are the students' expectations of teachers' feedback?). Then I developed a set of questions based on their answers. This set of questions were to be asked in their next interview to answer research question four (How do students experience teachers' feedback on their written essays?)

These interviews included students' responses to several questions about feedback, such as which types of feedback they preferred, how they dealt with some types of feedback and what difficulties they faced when receiving the feedback. They were interviewed four times, once before they received the feedback and three times after each feedback was provided. Such a process is followed to obtain a comprehensive view of the topic being investigated. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an insight into students' experiences and obtain answers to questions that could not be answered through other types of data collection methods such as observation. These interviews also gave me answers to how and when feedback was given, the process of submitting the coursework, and how they respond to the feedback provided. The interview schedule is attached in Appendix 2.

#### 4.4.1.2 Semi-structured interview with teachers

Another semi-structured interview was conducted individually with two faculty members who taught those students. Therefore, an answer to the first research question (What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at Prince University?) was obtained. In addition, a set of questions were added based on students' coursework. Thus, I could answer Research Question Two; (What is the

understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?). Teachers were asked questions on the teaching of writing and the use of feedback (see Appendix 3, for a copy of the interview schedule). The aim of the interviews was to gain further insights into their beliefs, the types of feedback the teachers gave to their students and their perceptions of their students' response to the feedback. The interviews also aimed to find out factors behind the teachers' beliefs and practice regarding the feedback.

#### 4.4.2 Students' Written Coursework

As case study research allows the strategy of using multiple data sources, it enhances data credibility (Patton, 2002) and allows me to provide evidence from the students' coursework. Collecting students' written coursework after the teachers' feedback was done in this study as it is one of the methods recommended by Hyland (2015) when conducting research concerning writing. He considers text data as a major source of data for researching writing. Therefore, students' written coursework was obtained in my study in order to observe the teachers' written feedback. This type of data was chosen to enrich my findings as it shows how the students' experience and response are influenced by teacher feedback. Moreover, text data shows how the teacher uses feedback, and which type they use. It also helped me to understand the purpose of teacher feedback. In other words, I pointed out a comment from the teacher and asked her about her purpose of giving such a comment. For example: 'what do you expect from your students in reply to this comment?'. Text data also enabled me to realise students' problems in understanding teacher feedback. insights into students' responses were obtained while the interview was being conducted as I had asked them to bring their coursework to each interview. The students' written

coursework was photocopied and returned to them at interview. My main focus during the interview was on the types of feedback used in responding to students' writing and on the students' reaction towards the feedback. From these copies, I gathered data on the types of feedback given by teachers and how students dealt with it in the next coursework. Therefore, using such a method allowed me to investigate the issue deeply and enhanced my interpretation and understanding of what the participants meant.

## **4.5 Data Collection Procedures**

In this section, a detailed description of the data collection procedure is presented. I start with the process of inviting participants to participate in the current study, then I describe the procedure around interviews. I end with my understanding of my role as a reflexive researcher.

### **4.5.1 Process of Inviting Participants and Data Collection**

Within nine weeks of the second semester of 2019, I started the process of data collection at Prince University. In order to simplify the description of the process of the data collection, I will present it in a number of stages. First, describing the process of accessing the participants; second, identifying the process of inviting teachers and students to participate; and finally, collecting the data.

In the first stage, accessing the participants, I contacted a gatekeeper, who was the Head of Department, to simplify the process of accessing the participants. An email written in Arabic was sent to the Head of Department seeking permission to conduct a study in the context. When approval was obtained (Appendix 10), an email containing the information sheet and consent form, written in Arabic (Appendix 8), was sent by the Head Department to the writing teachers. The teachers then contacted me

to begin accessing the students; they helped me in distributing copies of the Arabic version of the information sheet and consent form to year three and four students. The teachers were asked to select students of different levels of English language ability. The reasons for this were in order to get different views from different levels and to gain insight into how the feedback process was implemented with different levels of students. Only students who were willing to participate were asked to share their contact number for further communication. In the second stage, teachers and students who were willing to participate in my study were invited by WhatsApp. The Arabic language was used to arrange one-to-one interviews at their convenience. Interview protocols were followed with everyone (refer to Section 4.5.2, for interview protocol). Each interview was conducted in the Arabic language (both with the teachers and students) to encourage participants to talk comfortably, freely and fluently in their first language and to ensure full understanding. In terms of the third stage, the data collection process, the first interview was conducted with students individually before they received the teachers' feedback. In this interview, I orally presented the objectives, aims and procedures followed in this study to ensure they fully understood what the purpose of this study was although they were expected to read the information sheet prior to signing the consent form. Then I commenced questioning them about the module, writing skill, their understanding and attitude towards the feedback before they received it, and how the process of submitting drafts took place. Once students had received feedback from their teacher, another interview was conducted to understand their experience of teacher feedback and how they responded to it. As students submitted three different assignments, a total of three post feedback interviews, following each assignment, were conducted with each student. During the interview, a photocopy of the assignment was presented to discuss

the feedback provided by the teacher. Once I completed all students' interviews, another interview was conducted with their writing teachers to understand their practice, beliefs and understanding of the process of feedback. Figure 4-4 below shows the data collection procedure.

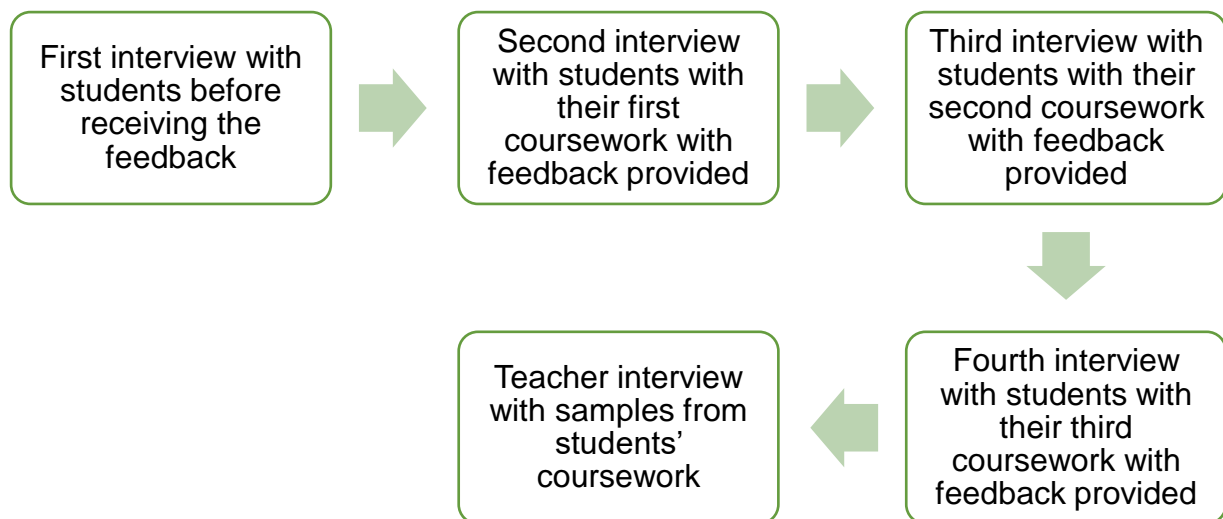


Figure 4-4: Data collection procedure for each year

#### 4.5.2 Interview Protocol with Students and Teachers

The following are steps followed while conducting the interviews; I adopted these suggestions from Gaudet & Robert (2018). Some steps have been modified based on my context.

##### **Step One: Preparing for an interview**

While preparing for the interview, the following were considered. I reviewed my research project, outlined and studied its aims and objectives and conducted the literature review on my topic, which allowed me to examine the interviews questions analytically. The interview questions were then modified and improved in English and then translated in Arabic. Ethical issues (Section 4.8) were also considered. I also prepared notes on how to start the conversation, including a brief about me and about

the research project and interview guide. I then familiarised myself with the technical aspects of the recording devices (phone application and recorder) I was going to use. Creating students' profile sheet was also a good suggestion by Esterberg (2002 cited in Gaudet & Robert, 2018). This sheet included information about the interview such as the date, time, pseudonym, and notes (Appendix 4). This suggestion helped in organising and managing my data while preparing for the analysis. I also create a sheet for task completion in order to manage each task and ensure that everything was done (Appendix 4). I used two separate high-quality digital recording devices: (1) an iPhone, Recoding Memos application; and (2) Digital Voice Recorder. I chose two devices to allow me to conduct more than one interview in a day, thus ensuring that there was a backup device. It was also helpful because it allowed me to store and share the recordings through both email and iCloud accounts, thus facilitating their transfer to my computer. After each interview, I renamed the recording using the interviewee's pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

### **Step Two: Setting up the interview.**

The interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience and in their mother tongue (i.e., Arabic). All students and one teacher were interviewed face to face in an allocated office at Prince University, while one teacher preferred to be interviewed by phone. A sufficient gap between each interview occurred. Before starting the interview, all interviewees were informed that they would be recorded for the research ethical purposes. A practical challenge was met during the data collection which was that two participants (i.e., students) preferred not to be recorded. Although they were clearly informed about the anonymity and the privacy of their records as stated in the information sheet and orally in the beginning of the first interview, they

felt uneasy about being recorded due to their unfamiliarity with interview procedure. Choosing other participants would have been very difficult, because participants were nominated by their teachers based on the level of proficiency. This means I would have needed to contact teachers to nominate other student participants. Following the advice of BERA ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018), I did not insist on participants to be audio-recorded and I followed another approach (i.e., note-taking). Therefore, due to the time limitation I decided to continue with these participants after I had agreement with them that I could contact them on the phone after the interviews if I needed more information for further clarification. However, I did not need to phone any of these students for clarification. Therefore, during the interviews, I decided to collect their responses by note-taking, which they had no objections to. This approach was followed because there were four interviews per student, which allowed the provision of intensive conversations, and further communication was possible (i.e., via phone). As a result, note-taking provided rich data and did not compromise the findings. In addition, it clearly helped and increased participants' willingness to share their experiences, but it also posed challenges when writing while the participants were talking, because I had to pay attention to what they said in order to take satisfactory interview notes. This led to slightly longer meetings with those two participants.

I tried to make the interviewees feel welcome and relaxed by engaging in some small talk to put them at ease. Some of the questions they were asked were: 'How are you today? How are your studies going?'. Then, I discussed the objectives of the interview and made everything clear, such as the topic and the areas that would be addressed. I motivated the interviewees by explaining how the information would be invaluable and relevant to the educational contexts. The recording device was switched on and remained on for the whole duration of the interview.



### **Step Three: Getting the interaction right.**

I attempted to be a good listener and paid attention to what each interviewee was saying as recommended by Gaudet & Robert (2018) as they believe it is an essential part of the interview process. I also asked follow-up questions. In this stage, I experienced some challenges when interviewing students. For example, first, some students asked if any of their critical responses towards the teaching and feedback would be shared with their teacher. I had to explain again that any information obtained during interviews would solely used for research purposes, and if they were still not comfortable, the recording was optional. Second, some students agreed to participate only because they had been nominated by their teacher. When we first met, they did not seem to have read the information sheet, which made me ask them again to read and sign the consent form before participation. This process took time away from the scheduled meetings. Third, some students also seemed to wonder why I was interviewing them. I therefore had to clarify the importance of their participation and clear up all doubts they had regarding the process of data collection. To allay their fears and concerns, I sought their approval again for the following interview. Each interview ended with a summary of the main issues discussed during the interview and the interviewees were also asked if there was anything else that they thought would be helpful for me to know. These clean-up questions gave the participants the opportunity to raise issues that were important to them, which therefore yielded very useful unanticipated data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

#### **Step Four: After the interview.**

The main points were summarised, and key information was recorded. A self-report and reflection were written to address how the interview went. This step helped me to improve the next interview in terms of content as well as my interview techniques. I created a file for each participant with all the key information such as date, time and a tick column to indicate that the participant had been interviewed. Their written coursework was collected and copied. After finishing the data collection, the key parts in the interviews were then transcribed in Arabic, and a copy of the transcription and notes were attached to the participant's file. Hence, each student's file included information about the conducted interviews, copies of written texts and the transcription. This step was very helpful in organising the data to be ready for data analysis.

#### **4.5.3 My Role as a Reflexive Researcher**

In the initial stages of conducting this research, I felt certain that I was positioned as a complete insider. Subsequently, I came to understand that my position as a researcher is flexible rather than static, as I shifted from insider to outsider. There were three ways that facilitated in identifying and developing my positionality (Savin-Baden & Major, 2012). The first involves the acknowledgement of any personal biases that may impact on the research. Secondly, researchers should consider how they view others and how they are perceived, acknowledging that sometimes individuals may be unaware of how they and others have constructed their personal identities. This would involve considered in-depth thought and critical self-analysis which may not commonly occur. The final step involves researchers locating themselves within the research context and process and this would include an acknowledgement that they may

influence them. In this section, I refer to my experiences as I adapted my conceptions regarding my positionality as a researcher.

According to Banks (1998:7), the true “indigenous insider researcher” shares the values, perspectives, behaviours, beliefs, and knowledge held by the indigenous/cultural community under study. Despite my apparent insider position, having been away from Prince University context since 2013 studying in a western university means that I was considered as an outsider researcher by participants. However, I found that this apparent distance did not influence my familiarity with the context. This was because I knew what had been improving and changing from my colleagues in who remained at the university. Combined with my own previous learning experiences, this familiarity reduced my sense of being an outsider.

From an insider perspective, I necessarily considered my role as a reflexive qualitative researcher, in particular when determining how best to navigate my data collection journey. As a former four-year student of English language in the target EFL university context, I was cognisant of all the university rules and regulations. Thus, this enabled me to regard myself as an insider, due to my prior knowledge and understanding of the context (Bell, 2005). However, I was careful not to impose my personal views on the participants during data collection and analysis.

Interestingly, I found that having been away from the study context allowed me to detach myself during the data collection process, which limited my influence over the participants. I also engaged in continuous reflection and critical examination of the research, to improve its validity (Greene, 2014). Having had a good relationship with the head of the department previously afforded me “expediency of access” (Chavez, 2008:481) (i.e., she facilitated my access to the field and supported my interactions

with participants and provided me with an office to conduct interviews inside the university). Thus, I felt relaxed and was able to conduct interviews in a friendly atmosphere. The interactions were more natural because I was familiar with the social setting and knew how to approach individuals with the help of my colleague. She was happy to help and welcomed the opportunity to join in and discuss issues with teachers and students (Bell, 2005). Therefore, having access to an office in the English Department gave me the opportunity to conduct the interviews with the participants and collect their coursework.

Over the course of the data collection, I came to see myself more as an outsider, shifting from my initial understanding of my positionality as an insider researcher based on my: "...relation to the social and political context of the study—the community, the organisation, or the participant group" (Rowe, 2014:2). I came to realise and willingly acknowledge that "[the researcher's] positionality is never fixed and is always situation and context-dependent" (Holmes, 2020:2). Coming from the same context (i.e., Prince University) as the students, but having studied in a western context (i.e., Exeter university), I had some insight into their experiences and the ability to understand the implications present in their responses. I also share the same language as the participants, and am aware of their different possible experiences; thus, I knew what to ask and how to ask it, and understood the participants' responses. However, "no research is free of the biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher and we cannot separate self from those activities in which we are intimately involved" (Sword, 1999:277). Therefore, I was reflexive when checking for the influences of my previous learning experiences, my educational background, and professional beliefs, in relation to the participants' responses. For example, one teacher participant questioned the relevance of interviews in this research and gave

examples of her involvement with other researchers who used questionnaires. Her comment made me reflect on the knowledge regarding data collection that I had newly acquired due to my exposure to a western institution, i.e. the qualitative tradition of doing research, and highlighted the necessity to address this participant's queries. As a result, I addressed her concerns by introducing her to the importance of interviews to my project, and explained the anticipated knowledge that could be generated via interviews.

Moreover, another way that I have identified and developed my positionality is considering how participants view me, hence I understand how others saw my positionality. I was not fully aware of how participants have constructed my identity until some participants (i.e., students) questioned who I was and why I was interviewing them. For example, one student asked, "are you from the Ministry of Education?". Her question made me reflect on my identity as a researcher and the reason of engaging with her to collect the data. This participant, like other participants in the study field, was curious about what I was doing exactly and why. Students' questions on my role in the field were fluid and oscillatory and some recognised my dual positionality. At first, I was identified by the dual position and introduced like an employee who came from the Ministry of Education, soon research participants saw my role as a researcher and interviewer, which occurred in the first 2 weeks of my arrival in the field. However, I did not need to exert additional effort to build a rapport and gain the trust of the participants. Therefore, this situation suggests that the participant seemed to view me as an outsider. In terms of culture, the participants and I share the same language including colloquial language which might be also the reason for them to ask me in a friendly manner and engage with me. Hence, this gives

another dimension which, from participants' view, I was constantly shifting along different positions, depending on time, participants, and topic (Holmes, 2020).

Berger (2015) claims that reflexivity is “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220). Therefore, during and after the interviews, I self-reflected, which enabled me to identify the questions and content that I had focused on, and to become aware of my reactions during the interviews, in terms of both thoughts and feelings. After each interview, reporting what had happened helped me improve in the next interview, and/or develop additional questions which enabled me to engage in-depth with the participants.

Moreover, being a researcher who had studied and trained at the University of Exeter and was therefore inspired to conduct research, not only taught me the importance of self-reflecting but also helped me when carrying out the interviews and helping participants to voice their concerns regarding the challenges they faced in terms of feedback. In addition, I was able to demonstrate my understanding and willingness to hear both teachers' and students' views pertaining to the issues that were discussed. Moreover, my knowledge of the Saudi university context helped me understand and interpret their beliefs, practices, and experiences, which I would not have understood if I were not familiar with the research context. The development of my understanding of my positionality took “considerable time and much ‘soul searching’”. It is not a process that can be rushed” (Holmes, 2020:4). Therefore, I can argue that I found myself in an in-between position along the insider/outsider continuum (Bruskin, 2018). In other words, I came to acknowledge the importance of the fact that the researcher can move fluidly between positions, or even

simultaneously hold insider and outsider identities in a variety of contexts (Bruskin, 2018:206).

## 4.6 Data Analysis

This section presents the data analysis procedure. The analysis includes the teachers' interviews, the students' interviews, and analysing of the teachers' written feedback in students' written texts. The interviews were thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, while the teachers' written feedback on students' texts was analysed following the model of Ferris et al., (1997) and Ellis (2008) as stated in Section 3.3.1. The data analysis was thematic and included two approaches: deductive (codes derived from the literature) and inductive (codes which emerged from the data) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 4.6.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a hugely popular analytic method. Its popularity partly reflects its independence from any particular theoretical approach or epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this reason, it was useful to adopt it as my research position is based on the constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, thematic analysis was useful because it enabled me to examine, from a constructionist methodological position, the meanings that participants shared in the interviews. At the same time, it also enabled me to explore how these constructions might reflect the reality of participants' experiences. Thus, in this study, I am interested in examining the ways that people make meaning out of their experiences, as well as how they construct their social worlds through meaning-making. However, I also wanted to retain a focus on the ways in which these experiences were informed by their contexts. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) also argued that the adoption of this framework

allows for the generation of themes strongly linked to the data while bearing the research questions in mind.

#### 4.6.2 Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

In response to the nature of this interpretive research, I collected a considerable amount of qualitative data as mentioned in the research design including nineteen pieces of written coursework, which were used in the semi-structured interviews with two teachers and six students. In this study, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of their thematic analysis framework. I started with familiarising myself with the data and generating initial codes with each interview transcription separately. After generating the initial list of codes for each interview of participants in year three, I then integrated the data of the interviews of the other participants in year four to allow me to identify the initial themes. This analysis enabled me to identify the major themes related to the four questions of this research. The following section gives a detailed description of my analytical framework.

##### **Stage one: familiarising myself with the data.**

Once all the interviews were completed, I listened to the audio recordings several times and then transcribed in Arabic and translated them into English to simplify the coding. In addition, in order to secure the reliability and credibility of the transcriptions, I transcribed the interviews myself. Subsequently, I checked their content against the original recordings, in order to enhance their validity and confirm their accuracy (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Although it was time-consuming, it allowed me to engage myself even more deeply into the data and familiarise myself with all aspects of the transcripts. I divided the transcript into three files (year three file, year four file, teachers' file) for easy access. All the data were uploaded to my computer in



separate files in order to conduct separate analyses. Prior to analysing the data, I isolated extracts that needed more clarification from the participants because not all the details needed to be transcribed. These extracts transcribed in Arabic were sent to participants to allow them to check and modify the content to ensure my understanding. For example, teachers were contacted again through 'WhatsApp' to clarify their scoring criteria. This also gave them the right to withdraw or change any part of an answer from the original responses. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis "does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, discourse or even narrative analysis" (p. 17).

### **Stage Two: Generating Initial Codes.**

Saldaña (2013) defined a code as an aspect of a qualitative inquiry as the "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). Therefore, after familiarising myself with the data, I started working through the transcript manually. I used coloured pins to highlight similar codes; for example, students' responses regarding what feedback type they prefer were highlighted in yellow. Once all the students' interviews data for each class (i.e., year three) had been coded the name of the codes was written in the margin as shown in the sample in Table 4-4. I classified them into groups in tables under themes for clarity. I thus gave attention to all the extracts, in order to identify any repeated and unexpected patterns across the entire dataset.

Table 4-4: Sample of generating initial codes

Data	The code
<p><b>Sahar:</b> “How do you want the feedback to be and why?” <b>Jodi:</b> “I want a specific written correction because I want to know what to do”.</p> <p><b>Sahar:</b> “what type of error do you want this specific written correction on it?”.</p> <p><b>Maha:</b> “all grammar errors and to correct the sentence order”.</p>	<p>preference</p> <p>Focus of feedback</p>
<p><b>Sahar:</b> “can you tell me what you think about the teacher feedback you received?”</p> <p><b>Kloud:</b> ““It is important to write detailed comments on our written text, not only general comments.” “I do not know what to do”.</p>	<p>Student’s preference</p> <p>Student’s response</p> <p>Student’s difficulty</p>

**Stage three: searching for themes.**

In this phase, I tried to develop the level of my analysis by grouping codes under their potential themes as shown in Table 4-5. I considered the relationship between them in order to determine themes and sub-themes. All determined themes were discussed with my supervisors and peers to ensure that they were relevant. I then opened several files for each research question with its’ themes, including all the relevant codes and illustrated examples. I adopted several different techniques to facilitate this stage, including using a board to display mind maps, outlines and tables (Braun and Clarke, 2006:19). This enabled me to develop a thematic outline for the content of each theme.

Table 4-5: Sample of generating themes

Data	The code	Sub-theme	Themes
<p><b>The researcher:</b> how do you start the writing lesson?</p> <p><b>The participant:</b> I start by explaining a specific grammar, talking about the theme of the chapter such as, travelling or environment, and then I describe the types of the essay that students will be required to use” such as, descriptive essay. After that, “I ask students to brainstorm and discuss the topic with their peers”.</p>	<p>Teaching / The different tasks/ Writing instruction</p> <p>Focus of teaching and type of writing.</p>	<p>Activities in the classroom</p>	<p>Teacher's practice of teaching writing</p>
<p><b>The researcher:</b> can you explain how do you give feedback?</p> <p><b>The participant:</b> “I give feedback on each written text, to help students improve their writing and be aware of their errors ... I always try to write comments for students, so they can return to them when preparing for exams ... I think a large amount of feedback is useful for students; otherwise students may think they do not have errors”.</p>	<p>Amount of WCF</p> <p>Value of feedback</p>	<p>The purpose of giving feedback.</p> <p>The type of feedback</p>	<p>Teacher's practice of feedback</p> <p>Teachers' beliefs towards feedback</p>

#### **Stage four: Reviewing Themes.**

This stage was a critical aspect of this research, as it refined the candidate themes from the previous stage. I re-analysed the list of themes I had drawn up to create a thematic map; this included determining which were actual themes and which could be categorised as sub-themes. I achieved this by checking if a theme had sufficient supporting data and whether this data was too diverse (Braun and Clarke, 2006:20). This enabled me to link together a number of separate themes, while at the same time breaking others into sub-themes by identifying the relationships between the different elements of each theme and using their similarities and differences to organise them coherently. In order to make sense of constructed themes, I ensured I related each of them to the existing literature, and the research questions. In general, I attempted to strike a balance between the content of each theme, in order to ensure that all the themes and sub-themes were fully supported by extracts from my data. I also found myself using cross-case themes while collecting the similarities and differences between participants' interview transcripts. Thus, I collected them under one theme; this step helped to minimise the repetition of the themes and responses.

#### **Stage Five: Defining and Naming Themes.**

Following the generation of a thematic map representing all of my data, I then began the process of defining and refining the themes produced, i.e., by identifying the essence of each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I analysed the titles of the themes and sub-themes to confirm that they were fully representative of the purpose of the complete data set. I defined my themes by presenting a concise description of the purpose of each theme and how it answered the research question. This helped me to explain how each theme is related to the overall questions of my research. In

this stage, consultation with a PhD colleague enabled me to improve the theme and ensure that each theme was related to the research question.

### **Stage Six: Producing the Report.**

One of the biggest challenges I have experienced when working with qualitative interviews is reporting themes that I have identified within the data. However, after determining the final list of themes, followed by their sub-themes, and examples, I then undertook the writing up of the final report, recording the findings from evidence in the data. It was a challenge to report this in a consistent manner. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that reporting the findings of a thematic analysis entails showing its complexity supported with coherent accounts to convince the readers of its validity. I, therefore, focused on writing a concise, coherent and engaging account to support each theme from my data, while at the same time avoiding repetition.

#### **4.6.3 Coding Students' Written Coursework**

In order to analyse the teachers' written feedback, I attempted the following stages. First, all 19 essays of students were collected, copied, and classified based on their years (three and four). Students' coursework was copied twice, the first was used to error code the feedback types, where the second set of copies was used to identify and analyse feedback focus. I grouped all the written feedback in a table and classified them into four types. In order to analyse types of feedback, written feedback was coded based on the models of Ferris et al. (1997) and Ellis (2008) mentioned in Section 3.3.1.

The coding was as follows. First, direct feedback; each correction made by the teacher by crossing out the error and giving the answer. This type of feedback was

highlighted in green. Second, indirect feedback; this was classified as indicating errors only and indicated the specific location of the error, but no correction was made. Any marks that indicated errors were highlighted in pink. Third, commentary feedback; each written comment which is inserted between sentences, in the margin and at the end of the page was highlighted in yellow. I then classified this type in a table into two categories based on their strategies, which are imperative and statement commentary. Fourth, metalinguistic feedback: this was classified into two types which are error codes and brief grammatical description. Each error codes was circled, and the brief grammatical description was highlighted in blue. A sample of coding students' written coursework is presented in Appendix 5.

In order to analyse the focus of the written feedback, all errors classified were based on the type of errors. Four major types of error focus were adopted and developed from the literature (Ferris et. al., 1997; Tribble, 1996) which were language, organisation, content, and mechanical as shown in Table 4-6 below.

Table 4-6: Types of feedback focus, developed from Ferris et. al. (1997); Tribble (1996)

<b>Focus of teachers' written feedback</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Language</b>	Sentence structure, sentence length, tense, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and vocabulary.
<b>Organisation</b>	Essay format, number of paragraphs, organised paragraphs, and topic.
<b>Content</b>	Ideas, clarity, and content relevant to topic.
<b>Mechanical</b>	Spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, missing words, and space between words.

Therefore, from this coding, I was able to identify how the teacher provides feedback on students' writing and their focus when providing feedback.

#### **4.7 The Quality of The Research**

In this section, I outline the ways in which the quality of my research can be achieved and how quality can be demonstrated in this study as qualitative research. Quality in qualitative research remains a debatable issue since there are no fixed criteria for researchers. Qualitative research is flexible and diverse in nature, and is conducted using different methods, informed by various philosophical positions. It, therefore, unlike positivist research, cannot be governed by a pre-determined set of rules (Seale, 2002). However, it is possible to achieve rigour in qualitative research through the constant application of several procedures. The issue of validity in qualitative research has been subject to various conceptualisations and received several labels. For example, 'trustworthiness' is considered a more appropriate criterion for evaluating qualitative studies by Guba and Lincoln (1985), 'Authenticity' by Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011), and 'Validation process' by Creswell & Poth (2018). In this study, I adopted several strategies of Creswell & Poth (2018) as they view validation as a process of assessing the "accuracy of the findings, as best by the researcher, the participants, and the readers" (p. 386). These strategies, presented below, allow me to ensure the validity of my findings through different lenses which are my own lens, and those of my participants and peers.

Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) suggest piloting the instruments used in the case study rather than the whole case. To pilot the interviews the prepared guiding questions of the interview were discussed with my supervisor to determine whether they covered all the issues investigated in the study or not and decide to what extent

they were clear and adequate. I therefore piloted the teachers' and students' interview schedules with a PhD colleague in applied linguistics in order to check their duration and clarity. According to our discussion, I changed the sequences of the questions, developed, and deleted some questions. For example, the question 'Do you think this is an ambiguous comment?' was removed and replaced by 'Have you experienced any difficulties with teachers' written feedback?'. Another PhD colleague who shared the same first language of the participant (i.e., Arabic) checked the consistency between the English and Arabic versions of the interview schedules to ensure reliability. Moreover, I got some comments to modify the length of some questions and improve the sequence of the final questions. I then piloted the interview schedule with two EFL students and one EFL English teacher to check their efficiency, quality and clarity and explore the viability of the interview schedule. This pilot proved to be highly efficient in improving the final version of the questions, particularly with the refinement of my questions, along with their length and wording. The piloting allowed me to refine the content of my questions, thus 'thematizing' them as shown in the Appendix [Appendix 3](#). I then eliminated any questions covering the same ground and reorganised the remaining questions in a more logical manner. I found suggestions made by the participants in the pilot interviews were helpful and instructive, helping me to improve the comprehensibility, wording, length and sequence of the final questions (Bryman, 2016).

Second, Johnson (1997) suggested that "to improve the analysis and understanding of the construction of others, triangulation is a step taken by researchers to involve several investigators' interpretations, or peer interpretations of the data at different times or locations" (p. 284). Therefore, the triangulation strategy was used to improve my understanding of the participants' experience. I used different



data collection methods, i.e., students' written coursework and interviews with students and teachers.

Third, I enhanced the validity of my findings and interpretation by sharing them with colleagues at academic conferences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I presented the findings of my case study at the SWDTP (South-West Doctoral Training Partnership) conference hosted by the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter (2019). In addition, while writing this research, I discussed my work both formally and informally with other PhD candidates in the same field.

Fourth, I used member checking. For this, I checked the credibility of my analysis and interpretation by engaging an expert researcher and one of my PhD peers who had expressed a willingness to provide me with a consultation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the process of analysing and interpreting my data, I consulted a peer researcher who helped me with matching codes with themes and provided me with very useful feedback. Her comments were invaluable in improving my interpretation from a new perspective. Some of her comments were also extremely useful, highlighting points that I had inadvertently or otherwise disregarded in my research.

Finally, once the initial analysis and interpretation were finalised, I sent the findings with my interpretation to the supervisors who were supervising this current research. They returned the documents with very detailed comments regarding my interpretation and how the data was presented, as well as suggesting further details and improvements (Hays & Singh, 2012). After reading the supervisors' comments, I edited the draft and left it for a few weeks, which enabled me to review it through a new lens. This strategy offered me the opportunity to review the findings and

interpretation in another way after conducting the literature review and enhancing my knowledge of data analysis.

## **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

It is essential to consider ethics before any data is collected. The term ethics refers to “moral principles of guiding conduct which is held by a group or even by a professional” (Govil, 2013:17).

According to Cohen et al. (2018), researchers are required to pay critical attention to ‘ethical considerations’ to mitigate any psychological, social or physical risk. The following points mentioned by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) are carefully considered in this study to meet all ethical requirements.

### **4.8.1 Steps of Conducting Ethical Considerations**

#### **Step One: Accessing Participants**

Ethical approval provided by Ethics Committee Guidelines of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter was obtained to verify all ethical considerations (Appendix 6). After ethical approval was obtained (Appendix 9), I began the process of obtaining a second ethical approval from the Saudi higher education system, in accordance with their regulations. They checked the nature of my research and the interview questions to ensure that it had taken their regulations into consideration. These approvals confirmed that the content and procedures of my research would be conducted in an ethical manner, meaning that all methods and procedures used in the data collection were legally and ethically approved. Once I had obtained the approval, I contacted the Head of Administration of the Research and English Departments in Prince University to request permission to collect the data for

this research. Official approval (Appendix 10) was obtained, and an invitation email was sent to the EFL teachers in the department on my behalf. Govil (2013:18) states that participants should be informed of “why their participation is necessary”. Such information was included in an email with a letter of invitation containing general information about the research project in Arabic to ensure full understanding (i.e., aims, objectives, methods, what they are engaging in, why they were participating, and to whom it would be reported) (see Appendix 7). It is important to mention that at the end of the information sheet, a statement was written asking them to contact me via email and contact number if they were willing to participate in this project. Another email was sent to teachers who replied. They were required to sign the consent form (Appendix 8) and asked to invite students to participate by distributing the students’ information sheet (Appendix 7).

Only students who were willing to participate were asked to share their contact number for further communication. Those who expressed a willingness to be interviewed contacted me via ‘WhatsApp’ which enabled me to send them the consent form and arrange for interviews (Appendix 8). Therefore, before any data was collected, students and teachers had signed the consent form to confirm their willingness to participate. In addition, students were informed orally about the nature and aim of the research at the beginning of the first interview in case some of them had not read all the information sheet or because of their unfamiliarity with the research process. Emails, information sheets, and consent forms were written in their mother tongue, Arabic, to ensure full comprehension.

### **Step Two: The consent form and the right of withdrawal.**

Before the data collection began, a consent form was sent to all participants which included the following. All participants were informed at the start of the study that their participation was voluntary. It was made clear to participants that they could withdraw at any point without needing to provide an explanation at any time. All the researcher's contact details were provided to the participants in case anyone wanted to withdraw. The consent form contained, moreover, all the points regarding the voluntary participation that needed to be signed for agreement. The types of interviews (e.g., via contact number or face to face), the time, and location of the interviews were decided upon at the participants' convenience. Finally, I guaranteed their confidentiality and anonymity in the consent form. According to Govil (2013), the researcher is responsible for securing the participants' personal information, ensuring confidentiality, and avoiding any harm. I followed BERA's (2018) recommendation, which states that researchers should always keep participants' information confidential, meaning to remove any information that can lead to the participants' identity being known. To ensure anonymity, participants are represented by using pseudonyms.

### **Step Three: Privacy and data storage.**

The confidential, anonymous treatment of participants' data, data storage and disclosure were considered the norm for the conduct of research (BERA, 2018). To ensure confidentiality, participants and their institutions in this study were assured that they would not be identified in the current study. Participants were also informed that their names would be pseudonyms and would be removed from their written coursework. The data for this research was held in accordance with the Data

Protection Act and adhered to the procedures of data-protection stipulated by both the University of Exeter and the British Education Research Association (BERA, 2018). Therefore, I stored the data on the 'One Drive' of my computer for research purposes and it will be destroyed once the purposes are achieved. This ensures that no access is permitted to third parties or hackers. In regard to data disclosure, I stated in the information sheet that the findings of the study would be published in the current thesis or posters and presented in an academic conference such as seminars.

#### **4.9 Challenges and Limitations**

In the process of conducting this research, some challenges were met. First, the process of requiring approval from the ministry of education in Saudi Arabia took much longer than expected, which inevitably led to a three-month delay. I had planned to start collecting the data in the first semester of the programme at Prince University. However, due to this delay, I had to collect data in the second semester. This prevented me from exploring the students' expectations and preferences from the beginning of the first semester. Therefore, I chose to reach them in the second semester. Second, prior to recording the interviews, I had to explain to each interviewee the importance and how secure the recording was, which was due to their lack of familiarity with being interviewed. They became familiar with the process by the third and fourth interview. Finally, I was asked by the Department of English at Prince University to conduct all interviews with students on the campus in their presence at the University. Thus, managing the students' time around their lectures required effort and patience as I had to interview two to three students in a day during working hours. As the University opened from 07:00 am to 04:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday, I had to manage my interview schedule based on the campus opening hours.

Regardless of the limitations mentioned above, the Head of Department tried her best to ease the process of collecting data by meeting the teachers and emphasising to them the importance of their participation and its voluntary nature, which helped them to simplify access to the students. All participants showed their willingness and readiness to help provide any information required, although they did not appear to be familiar with such a method of data collection. Both teachers were helpful and expressed their desire to be contacted again for any further information.

This chapter has presented a description of how this study was designed. It introduces and discusses the methodological assumptions, including the adopted design and the participants' information and methods. This chapter also presents the procedure involved in accessing the context. The data analysis approach and the quality of feedback are also discussed in detail. Finally, this chapter examines the ethical issues and challenges of the study. In the following chapter, the findings resulting from the research design are presented.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

### 5.1 Overview

The previous chapter discussed the methodological underpinnings of the current research, including a detailed explanation of the steps taken throughout the analysis. This current chapter presents the findings in relation to the research questions, using an empirical analysis extracted from a number of datasets. The chapter is divided into five sections exploring multiple themes, which are as follows. The first section presents the process of feedback discussing two themes regarding teachers' practice of teaching writing and providing feedback. The second section reports teachers' understanding of giving feedback. The third section presents factors influencing teachers' process of giving feedback. The fourth section identifies students' expectations of their teachers' feedback including their preferences. Finally, students' experience of teachers' feedback including difficulties, and responses is reported. Table 5-1 shows the themes generated through the cross-case analysis of the complete datasets, and the datasets used for each theme.

Table 5-1: Research questions, themes, and datasets

Research questions	Themes	Datasets
<p>1) What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at Prince University?</p>	<p>- Teachers' practice of teaching writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with two teachers</li> <li>• 19 items of students' coursework.</li> </ul>
	<p>- How teachers provide feedback</p>	
<p>2) What is the understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?</p>	<p>- Teachers' understanding of feedback and beliefs concerning giving feedback on students' coursework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with two teachers.</li> </ul>
	<p>- Factors influencing teachers' process of giving feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with two teachers.</li> <li>• Students' coursework.</li> </ul>
<p>3) What are the EFL students' expectations of their teachers' feedback?</p>	<p>- The preferences of students towards differing types of feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with six EFL English major students.</li> </ul>
	<p>- Students' preferences concerning focus of feedback.</p>	
	<p>- Types of errors and student expectations.</p>	
<p>4) What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?</p>	<p>- The difficulties students encountered when dealing with the feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with six EFL English major students</li> <li>• 19 items of coursework.</li> </ul>
	<p>- Lack of communication and neglect of student-teacher dialogue.</p>	
	<p>- Students' responses to the feedback.</p>	



## 5.2 The Process of Giving Feedback to EFL students

This section examines the findings under two main themes (see Table 5-2). The first concerns teachers' general approach to the teaching of writing, including: (1) teaching and learning activities used in the writing classroom; (2) expectations relating to coursework; and (3) practices relating to marking. The second theme focuses on teachers' feedback practices, as obtained from the analysis of the feedback given on students' coursework, including: (1) teachers' overall strategy and (2) types of feedback and (3) feedback focus employed. These themes were generated deductively, primarily as a result of the interviews conducted with the teachers, as well as the analysis of the feedback provided on students' coursework. Both themes are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Table 5-2: The process of giving feedback

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
Teachers' practice of teaching writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teaching and learning activities employed in the classroom.</li><li>- Coursework expectations.</li><li>- Marking practices.</li></ul>
How teachers provide feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Overall strategy when responding to students' texts.</li><li>- Types of written feedback.</li><li>- Feedback focus.</li></ul>

### 5.2.1 Teachers' Practice of Teaching Writing

In order to understand the teachers' approach to their students' coursework (i.e. the focus of this current study), it is vital to consider: firstly, the teachers' instruction methods in relation to written work (particularly in an EFL context) and secondly, how this fits into the writing process. The following findings were extracted from interviews with the teachers.

### 5.2.1.1 Writing Classroom Activities

In this subtheme, I present all the activities conducted during the writing classroom collected from the teachers' interviews. One of the main areas demonstrating a teacher's approach to practice concerns the learning and teaching activities used to achieve the intended learning outcomes. As explained in Chapter 2, the textbook demands the use of a process-based approach to the teaching of writing (See Section 2.5). In order to explore whether teachers followed this approach, I discuss the ways they delivered their writing sessions, including their manner of instruction, and the teaching activities they employed, as presented below. Teacher's responses about their teaching activities can be helpful not only to perceive teachers' beliefs of writing and of the different approaches of teaching writing, but also to understand the influence of their used approaches and methods on their ways of providing feedback. It should be noted that in both teaching years examined these lessons consisted of a single three-hour writing session each week.

#### ➤ **Teaching activities**

The following extracts represent the teachers' replies to my questions regarding the teaching instructions used in the writing session. Both teachers when describing their ways of teaching writing reveal that they believe that language accuracy is the most important aspect of writing, and a good writer should write correct grammatical sentences and use appropriate vocabulary. In other words, they believe that they should focus on students' grammatical and lexical knowledge to develop their writing skills. Thus, they emphasised these issues in their writing lessons for helping their students to build their vocabulary knowledge and understand the grammar rules as reported in the excerpts below.

I teach them how to, for example, develop a comparative essay and how it should be well written by using relevant vocabulary and for example, how to introduce a topic sentence for each paragraph. (Sara, Interview)

I do not care about ideas and opinions, because they differ from one student to another... I do my best to improve their use of grammar, as you know, it is important when writing I should emphasise on it. (Sara, Interview)

Students have an issue with spelling and sentence structure ... students should build a correct full sentence (Noor, Interview)

The conversation with Sara also revealed a contradiction that she confirms that her objective was also to focus, not on the ideas expressed, but on genre as stated:

I do not care about ideas and opinions, because they differ from one student to another. What's important to me is that they follow the genre required in the coursework (Sara, Interview)

Each unit in the textbook includes the particular type of essay being studied (e.g., a comparative essay). Sara stated that, when teaching this unit:

I teach them how to develop a comparative essay and how it should be well written by using relevant vocabulary and for example, how to introduce a topic sentence for each paragraph. (Sara, Interview)

Furthermore, both teachers reported and described their methods of teaching writing. Sara, who teaches a class of thirty-five students, reported that:

I start the lesson by explaining a specific grammar point, talking about the theme of the unit, for example, travel or the environment... then I describe the types of essays students will be required to write, for instance, a descriptive essay. In this essay, for example, I introduce a descriptive words that should be used in such type of essay. (Sara, Interview)

On the other hand, Noor, who teaches a class of fifty-two students, gave a similar account, despite the different activities she used to deliver her writing sessions, which are to be discussed below. Noor starts the lesson by:

Presenting a sample of a written essay from the textbook which they read and analyse, mainly to point out the topic sentence, as well as the supporting sentences and concluding sentence and the relevant vocabulary. (Noor, Interview)

Additionally, Noor followed a different methods for her students to assess them by asking students to write one paragraphs per week. She stated that:

I divide the essay up and teach the students to write only one paragraph per week. For example, how to write or improve the introduction of the essay ... Each week, I ask students to develop a paragraph until the essay is ready to be submitted; then we start another essay with another genre. (Noor, Interview)

The excerpts above demonstrate that teachers' selection of teaching approach embodies a product-based approach to the teaching of writing which puts a particular emphasis on the form of the written texts and mainly focuses on developing students' grammatical and lexical knowledge. They also reported to apply the different stages of the product approach, familiarisation stage, controlled and guided stages and free writing stage. This approach was also demonstrated by their focus on the organisation and structure of these essays, as well as on language, as opposed to the process focus outlined in the textbook. This is not surprising because students are in low level on language, where writing accuracy is an important concern in the EFL writing classrooms because students' writing performance is usually evaluated based on how accurate they are in grammatical areas, and essay organisation. Clearly, we can see that both teachers regardless the difference of how they deliver their teaching

materials, both focus on the final product without implementing multiple drafts. They also applied learning activities employed in the classroom, which are presented below.

➤ **Learning activities**

Despite the fact that both teachers' teaching activities primarily follow the product-based approach as mentioned above, they have also employed some stages of the process approach. They demonstrated good knowledge about the different methods to teaching writing. For example, Sara uses the brainstorming and peer discussion as a part of teaching writing as she stated that

I ask the students to brainstorm and discuss the topic with their peers. (Sara, Interview)

Additionally, Noor stated that:

Students start writing their own essay by choosing a topic, followed by brainstorming, and sharing ideas on the board, guided by the teacher asking students questions related to the topic, in order to develop full sentences. Finally, students start writing their coursework during the lesson. (Noor, Interview)

Both teachers employed brainstorming and peer collaboration, which reflected their awareness of activities beneficial for facilitating a process-based approach. However, they used these activities in service of a product-based approach to the teaching of writing, as mentioned earlier.

Although both teachers employ some stages from the process approach, they were very structured based on the book, for example,

Students open their books and undertake the exercises based on the lesson ... while I circulate to help those who have questions. (Sara, Interview)

we write and practise many sentences in the exercises from the book, which helps to improve students writing. (Noor, Interview)

Another way of learning activities conducted by Noor in her writing classroom is that:

I also show them essays containing language errors, and ask them to work together to identify and correct the errors. (Noor, Interview)

In short, teachers' teaching activities tended to be primarily teacher-centred, so reinforcing a teacher-led classroom with limited opportunities for students to develop their own writing (i.e., no redrafting nor peer feedback). Moreover, as stated by both teachers multiple times during the interviews, the activities generally addressed language form (i.e. grammar, and sentence structure) rather than selecting activities enabling students to benefit from peer feedback or develop multiple drafts and engage with the process of writing itself, rather than focusing on the final product. This analysis therefore indicates a lack of constructive alignment between the intended learning outcomes, as stated in the textbook mentioned in Section 2.5 (which advocates a process-based approach), and the teaching methods and activities of instruction used by the teachers when teaching skills related to the written language.

#### 5.2.1.2 Coursework Expectations

In this subtheme, I present what writing teachers expect from students on their writing coursework and what criteria they ask students to follow. Both interviews revealed the teachers shared a similar approach to written coursework expectations for both years. Thus, as noted in the previous section, both teachers reported requesting their students to submit handwritten coursework after completion of their unit activities. After each unit, both sets of students (years three and four) were required to submit a single piece of coursework. The teachers also reported that, for

each semester, three units were required to be completed. During the current semester, the three taught units concerns three writing genres: (1) a comparative essay; (2) a descriptive essay; and (3) an essay examining cause and effect (See Appendix 1, for the contents of each unit, along with the books used for each year). Regarding delivering coursework expectations, both teachers stated that they gave their coursework instructions orally during the sessions. Sara stated:

I do not set a word count for the coursework. The most important thing for me is that the student completes their coursework and that this contains a title and follows the required format of introduction/body/conclusion. I also state that each paragraph should contain five sentences. I think these are enough. Once they complete the coursework, they are required to submit it before the next writing coursework. (Sara, Interview)

Noor gave a similar response:

It is important for me that the coursework is structured into three separate paragraphs, in order to ensure that the student has understood the format and that she recognises that each paragraph serves a purpose. I also think that between one and two pages is sufficient. I do not set a word count for students to meet, believing that maybe one page per essay is enough. The most important thing that the student used the required genre, i.e. comparative essay or cause and effect essay. (Noor, Interview)

Table 5-3 summarises the coursework expectations for both years, as reported by both teachers discussed above.

Table 5-3: Coursework expectations for years Three and Four

<b>Coursework Expectations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no word limits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are required to write in the following format: introduction-body-conclusion.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be no fewer than five sentences in each paragraph.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students submit the coursework following each unit, with a total being three items of coursework.</li> </ul>

When prompted to explain the criteria used to set these expectations for their students, Noor stated that:

In the first week of the academic year, writing teachers had a discussion on what should be implemented in the writing classes. We agreed to use the same coursework expectations and teaching methods, although teachers remain free to improve/change them if they prefer to do so. (Noor, Interview)

The excerpt from Noor’s interview confirms that the different years (i.e. third and fourth) were required to meet the same expectations. Following the submission of their coursework at the end of the unit, the pupils continued to attend writing sessions, in order to prepare them for the following unit, while the teachers provided feedback. For example, Sara noted that she took: “...ten to fifteen days to return the coursework, because I have another class to teach, and each class contains more than twenty students”. Noor also reported that she took up to two weeks to return work, due to teaching a class of fifty-two students. Following this period, the students were presented with their text, along with the teacher’s feedback, during class. Both Sara and Noor stated that their students were given the opportunity to discuss any comments with their teacher, but that neither year was expected to re-draft the coursework.



Sara reported that:

It depends on the student, whether she is interested in redrafting or not. I do not ask them to rewrite at all, but some redraft and ask me to check their writing again, which I do, while other students just receive my correction. (Sara, Interview)

Noor also reported that:

None of my students undertook any re-drafting. For example, if I write that an idea was “interesting, try to develop it”, they say “this is everything we can do”, meaning that they have no intention of submitting another draft. They just do the minimum of what is required, which is submitting the coursework. I find they simply have no interest in re-drafting the coursework. (Noor, Interview)

The above excerpts reveal the following. Firstly, the teachers were aware of the benefits of re-drafting as a development of the written task. Secondly, Sara felt that re-drafting was a matter of choice for the students, but Noor considered her students lacked any interest in re-drafting. Thirdly, re-drafting was not expected to form part of developing students’ written coursework, and it was not always encouraged during the writing process. This indicates the prevalence of a product-based approach, in particular due to the expectations the teachers set for their students, along with their perceptions of students’ lack of interest in generating multiple drafts of written coursework.

### 5.2.1.3 Marking Practices

In this subtheme I present a further significant aspect of the teachers’ practice concerning the coursework marking and the overall writing module assessment.

#### ➤ Coursework Marking

Teachers were asked about their marking practice towards students’ coursework. The interviews revealed a lack of any specific criteria from the Department of English

Language for marking students' coursework. Noor stated that "... there is not an assessment brief for us to follow". I, therefore, asked her about how she then came to set the marking criteria.

Noor stated that:

Teacher is responsible for creating her own marking criteria and practice. So, I created mine after discussing the criteria with a colleague from the male department, and we agreed that giving five marks per piece of coursework is commensurate with Year Four. (Noor, Interview)

From the above excerpt, we can see that it is the teacher's responsibility to devise and apply the criteria they believed appropriate for assessing students' written work.

Teachers were also asked about how they distribute the marks, and what marking criteria used for assessing students' writing competence.

Noor stated that:

I distribute these five marks as: one mark for the spelling; one mark for sentence structure; one mark for essay format which that require as (introduction, body and conclusion); one mark for the ideas; and one mark for coherence. (Noor, Interview)

Noor marked the individual pieces of written coursework submitted by her students, following marking criteria based on a consultation with a colleague, focuses on five aspects of writing, where each is weighted one mark. On the other hand, Sara stated:

I distributed three marks for the coursework, one mark for each piece of coursework submitted, which is mainly for the submission rather than an

assessment of their writing. This means that if the student did not submit the coursework, they would only lose one mark. (Sara, Interview)

This reveals that Sara's students tended to be assessed for the submission of coursework, without any consideration of its content or quality. Although Sara provided her students with feedback, she did not include any standardisation of marking on her students' coursework. This shows that Sara included the scores to motivate students to submit, as she did not want students to lose marks (e.g., "they would only lose one mark") if they did not submit. Noor, in line with this, although she set her marking criteria, her marking practice is influenced by her subjective nature, as she stated that:

What I usually do is to deduct one mark for every four errors, although sometimes, especially when there are lots of errors, I deduct a mark for every eight errors. I feel sorry for students when many marks are deducted, because if I followed the same distribution and continued to deduct marks for every four errors, some students would be left with zero. (Noor, Interview)

Clearly, both teachers followed their own marking criteria, which contradict with the textbook used in the current context that suggests the use of specific assignment rubric for each writing tasks, as presented in Section 2.5.

### ➤ **Writing Module Assessment**

As discussed above, in the context of the current study, each teacher was responsible for setting both the marking criteria and the distribution of marks, where they also tended to have different marking weightage on their students' coursework (i.e., one score per coursework in Sara's class, while five scores are allocated in Noor's class). To understand the marking setting for the writing modules, teachers were asked about the overall marking weightage, because this would provide us with an overview of how the module assessments are distributed. It is vital to show how their

scores were divided and count towards the whole module. The overall module assessment is illustrated in Table 5-4, as summarised from the teachers' interviews.

Table 5-4: Module Assessment

Assessments	Score weightage (Total 100%) (Each percentage point is weighted as one mark)	
	Year Three (Sara)	Year Four (Noor)
Coursework (Essays)	3%	15%
Participation in Classroom	7%	5%
Mid-term exam	40%	30%
Final examination	50%	50%

The above exploration of teachers' marking practice reveals the following: firstly, the lack of institutional guidelines and codes of practice regarding the assessment of students' written work and secondly, that assessment criteria tends to be considered the individual responsibility of teachers.

It is significant that the textbooks include an assignment rubric as presented in the context chapter (see Section 2.5). It should be noted that the exploration of this theme focuses on establishing an understanding of how marking criteria and practice can influence students' attitudes to teachers' written feedback, as well as to facilitate the discussion of the system applied in this context in Chapter 6.

The following section examines teachers' feedback practices, in order to identify the extent to which these overlap with their teaching of writing.

## 5.2.2 How Teachers Provide Feedback

In this study, the methods used to deliver feedback form an overarching theme delineating the process followed by both teachers. This encompasses the overall strategy employed when responding to students' texts, including types of feedback and area of focus, as well as the forms of error highlighted when drawing up feedback for students. These sub-themes were generated deductively from the analysis of the interviews conducted with the teachers, alongside the marked coursework of the students. This section examines each of these in turn.

### 5.2.2.1 The Overall Strategy Used When Responding to Students' Coursework

When I questioned the teachers on their overall approach to feedback, it became clear that they followed an identical strategy. They reported that they commenced by generally scanning the overall organisation and structure of the essay, then moved to focus on detail, i.e. the errors. Sara, the Year Three teacher, reported that:

I look at the overall format and see if my students differentiate between how each paragraph should be organised into the introduction-body-conclusion format. Then I scan through students' texts line by line, to highlight the language errors. After this, I return the texts to the students with my feedback. Then, during the lesson, I discuss orally the major recurring errors found in the work of most students rather than provide them on each student's text... I found it easier and save time and it is also to ensure that I have explain how to address the common errors to all students where they can ask and discuss. (Sara, Interview)

An example of Sara's feedback on the organisation of an assignment is provided in Figure 5-1.

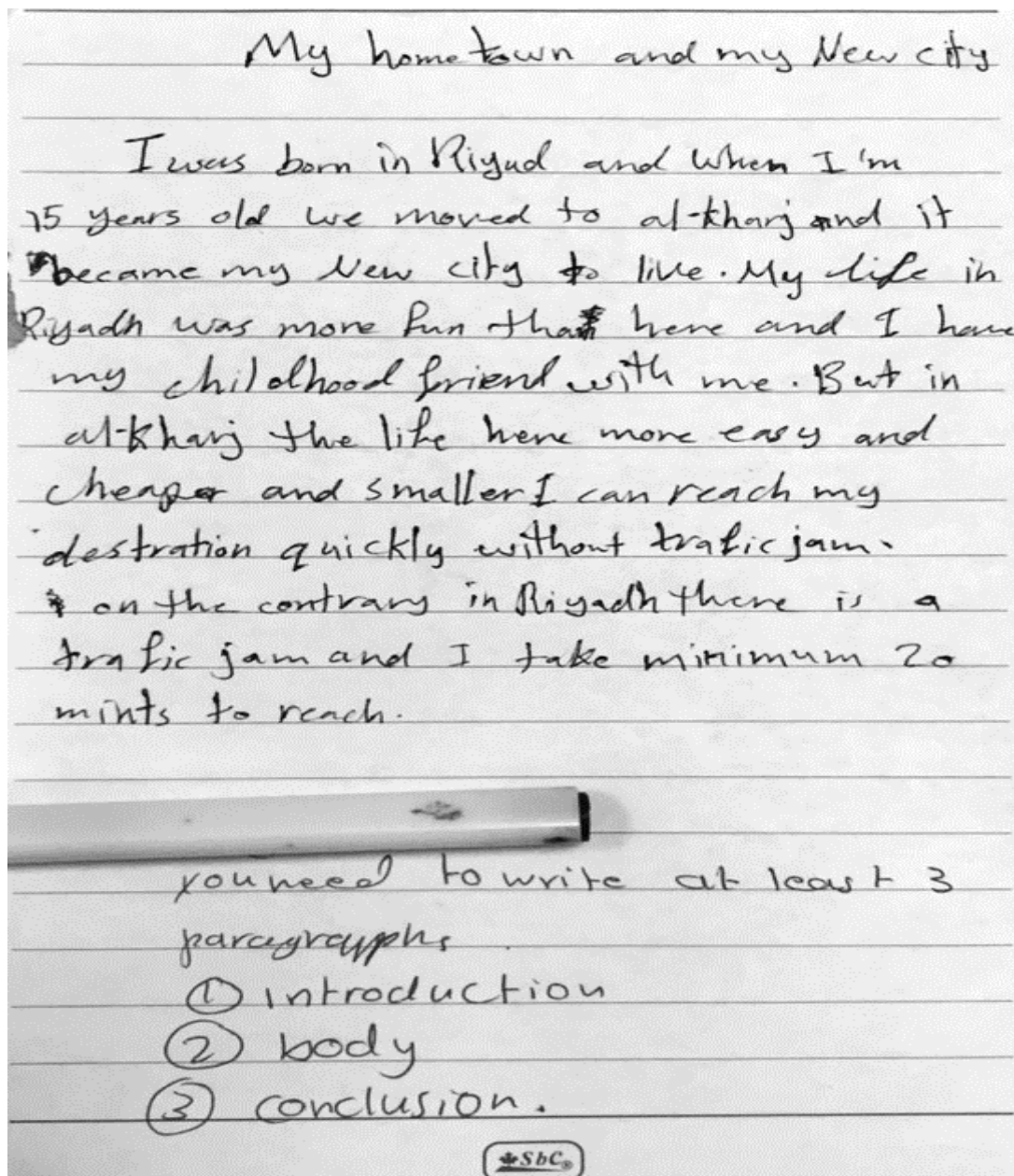


Figure 5-1: Sara's feedback on the organisation of the coursework

Noor, the Year Four teacher, was found to follow an almost identical strategy, as she explained in the following excerpt:

I start checking the main points that I had mentioned during the class, before I start giving the feedback on the organisation of the essay, the genre, and the title, in order to evaluate whether these aspects are present or not. Then, I start reading line by line, indicating any language errors...In the classroom, I explain the recurring errors to the whole class, because I found that this proves effective and saves time, while encouraging students to ask questions. (Noor, Interview)

This indicates that the overall feedback strategies implemented by both teachers followed three steps: firstly, a consideration of the overall structure of the essay; secondly, scanning for language errors; and thirdly, oral discussion in the classroom of the most frequently recurring errors made by students. To complement this perspective, I examined the students' coursework to explore the types of feedback provided by their teachers. The following section discusses some of these samples, as evidence for the types of feedback actually provided.

#### 5.2.2.2 Types of Written Feedback

The findings have been derived from a feedback analysis of the 19 pieces of coursework. As explained in the analysis section, the coding was based on the models of Ferris et al. (1997) and Ellis (2008) (see Section 3.3.1). The different types of feedback provided by both teachers were grouped in terms of their function and types of errors, before being presented in Table 5-5. I found several different types of feedback being employed, including commentary, direct, indirect, and metalinguistic. The following table demonstrates the types of feedback the teachers provided for their students, along with the related strategies and function, illustrated with examples from the students' coursework.

Table 5-5: Types of feedback used by teachers. Feedback examples for teachers Sara and Noor are indicated in underline and italic font, respectively

Types of written feedback	Strategies of feedback	Function of feedback	Examples
Commentary	Imperative	To give the students direct instruction of how to approach the task.	<p>Sara <u>"Use linking words."</u></p> <p>Noor <i>"follow the format of the essay."</i></p> <p>Sara <u>"each paragraph should contain at least three sentences."</u></p> <p>Noor <i>"you need to start your B.P with a topic sentence."</i></p> <p><i>B.P means body paragraph (as written by the teacher)</i></p>
	Provide Statement	To write a comment that contains information for the students, without explicitly providing the correct form.	<p>Sara <u>"very short conclusion."</u></p> <p>Sara <u>"long sentence."</u></p> <p>Noor <i>"this is a process essay."</i></p>
Direct Feedback	Indicate the error and give the correction.	To provide the correct answer.	<p><u>Exciting (Sara underlined -ing- and added -ed-)</u></p> <p><u>Sara corrected the spelling of the word (piece) above the error.</u></p>
Indirect Feedback	Indicating and locating the error/ indication only	<p>To indicate missing words, spaces between words, and to add or remove a word.</p> <p>No correction is provided.</p>	<p><u>Sara used arrows, question marks, and a cross, i.e. X</u></p> <p><i>Noor used underlining.</i></p>



<b>Metalinguistic Feedback</b>	Use of error code	The symbols indicate the errors above or beside them.	<u>Sara used 'S' for spelling and 'G' for grammar.</u> <i>Noor used 'ST' for sentence structure 'SP' for spelling.</i>
	Brief grammatical descriptions	To write a brief grammatical explanation after indicating errors in the text.	<u>Sara "have is used for (I, we, you, they)".</u>

After examining the marked texts, a quantitative overview of how many times each teacher used each correction technique was conducted as shown in the table below.

Table 5-6 Quantitative Overview of Teachers' WCF

Written Feedback types		Coursework marked by Noor		Coursework marked by Sara	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Commentary		4	3.8%	7	7.3%
Direct feedback		1	0.96%	35	36.4%
Indirect feedback		23	22.1%	44	45.8%
Metalinguistic feedback	Error codes	76	73.1%	9	9.4%
	Brief grammatical descriptions	0	0	1	1.1%
Total of written feedback		104	100%	96	100%

Error codes feedback is the most used form of feedback by Noor (73.1%), followed by indirect feedback (22.1%). However, in Sara's case, indirect feedback is the most applied form (45.8%) followed by direct feedback (36.4%). From the percentages shown in the table, Noor is seen to focus mainly on error codes, where Sara varies between using direct and indirect feedback, although indirect is slightly higher in use. After I established the types and number of feedback provided by the teachers, I then scrutinised them to determine the focus of each type. The following section explores the focus of the teachers' written feedback, along with the types of feedback employed.

### 5.2.2.3 Feedback Focus

My scrutiny of the written feedback on students' coursework identified that each type of feedback focused on a specific aspect of writing. An analysis of the teachers' feedback revealed the focus of both teachers when giving feedback, as presented in Table 5-7 below. The classification of this focus was adopted from the literature (Ferris et. al., 1997; Tribble, 1996) as reported in Section 4.6.3. The first focus concerns language form, i.e., sentence structure, sentence length, tense, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and vocabulary. The second is organisation, i.e., essay format, number of paragraphs, organised paragraphs, and topic. The third is content, i.e., ideas, clarity, and content relevant to topic. And finally mechanical, i.e., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, missing words, and space between words.

Table 5-7: The focus of teachers' feedback

The focus of teachers' feedback				
Participants	Language form	Organisation	Content	Mechanical
<b>Sara</b>	Direct, Indirect feedback and Metalinguistic feedback (i.e. brief grammatical descriptions)	Written Commentary	Indirect feedback (i.e. Question marks with underlining)	Direct, indirect, error codes and commentary
<b>Noor</b>	Metalinguistic feedback (i.e. error codes) and Indirect feedback	Written Commentary	Indirect feedback (i.e. Question marks with underlining)	Error codes

The findings from the students' coursework revealed that both teachers focused on language form, organisation, content and mechanical in descending order of frequency, with differences between the attention they devoted to these categories. Below is a discussion of each feedback focus, illustrated with examples from students' texts.

➤ **Focus on Language Form**

In line with their teaching practice, both Sara and Noor focused most of their attention on language form which focus on sentence structure, sentence length, tense, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and vocabulary. As shown in the above table, they used different types of feedback. For example, Sara used a mix of direct, indirect and error codes related to grammar (i.e. incorrect tense, and missing articles and prepositions). However, when explaining a point of grammar, she combined multiple types of written feedback. For example, she used indirect feedback by underlining the word 'has' in each line (as shown in Figure 5-2, below), she applied direct feedback by adding the corrected form (i.e. 'has' in line three) and then provided metalinguistic

feedback by explaining in written comments the correct use of 'has' and 'have' at the end of the essay.

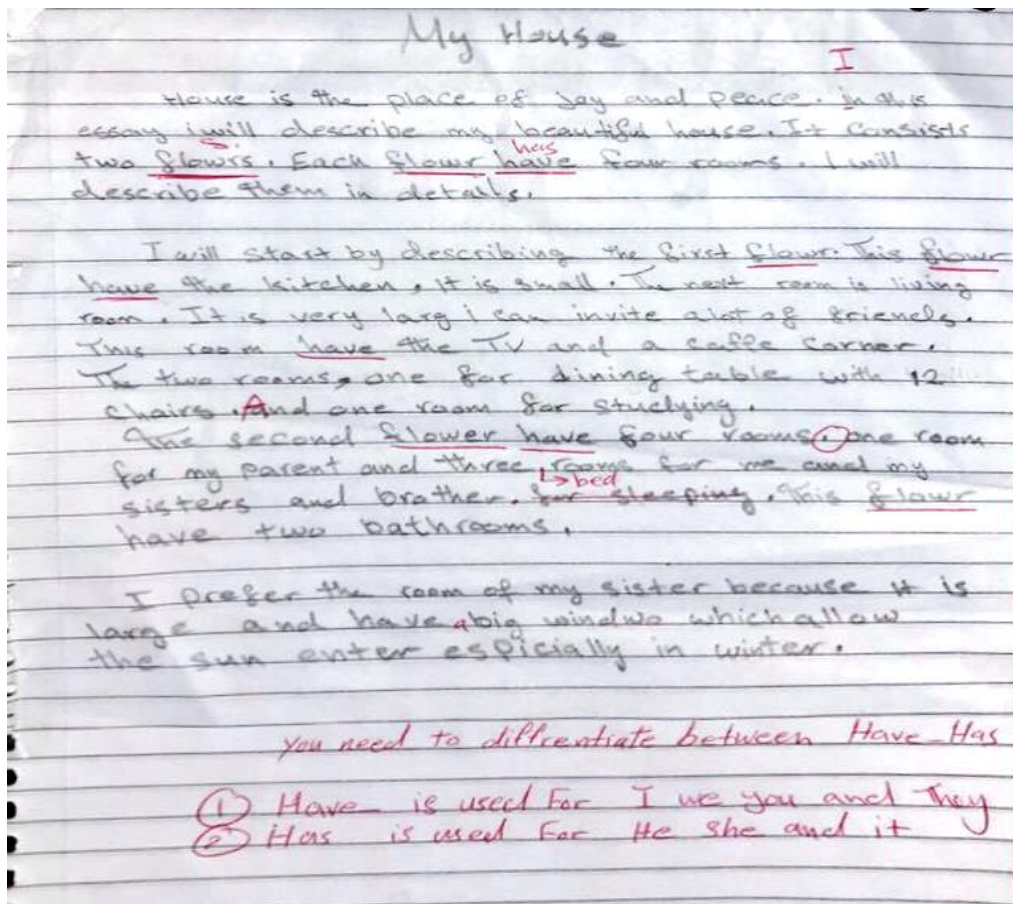


Figure 5-2: Sara's feedback related to grammatical errors

In addition, I found that Sara also made use of error codes, as shown in Figure 5-3, below. Although both errors presented in the figures concern language forms, Sara used two different types of feedback. In the interviews, Sara justified this difference in giving feedback to the same aspect of writing as discussed in detail in Section 5.4.

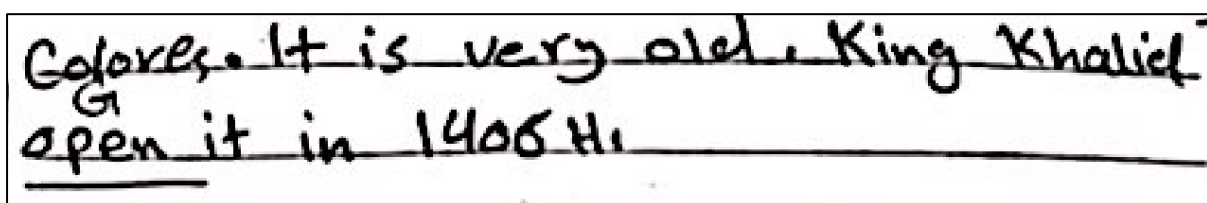


Figure 5-3: Sara's Feedback related to tense errors

On the other hand, the analysis of Noor's use of feedback types when focusing on language errors demonstrated that she primarily used underlining and error codes, for example (ST) for sentence structure, and did not make any use of written commentary. In addition, she paid a similar amount of attention in her feedback to issues related to sentence structure in all the students' texts. The example below in Figure 5-4 demonstrates how Noor mainly used underlining and error code on sentence structure errors.

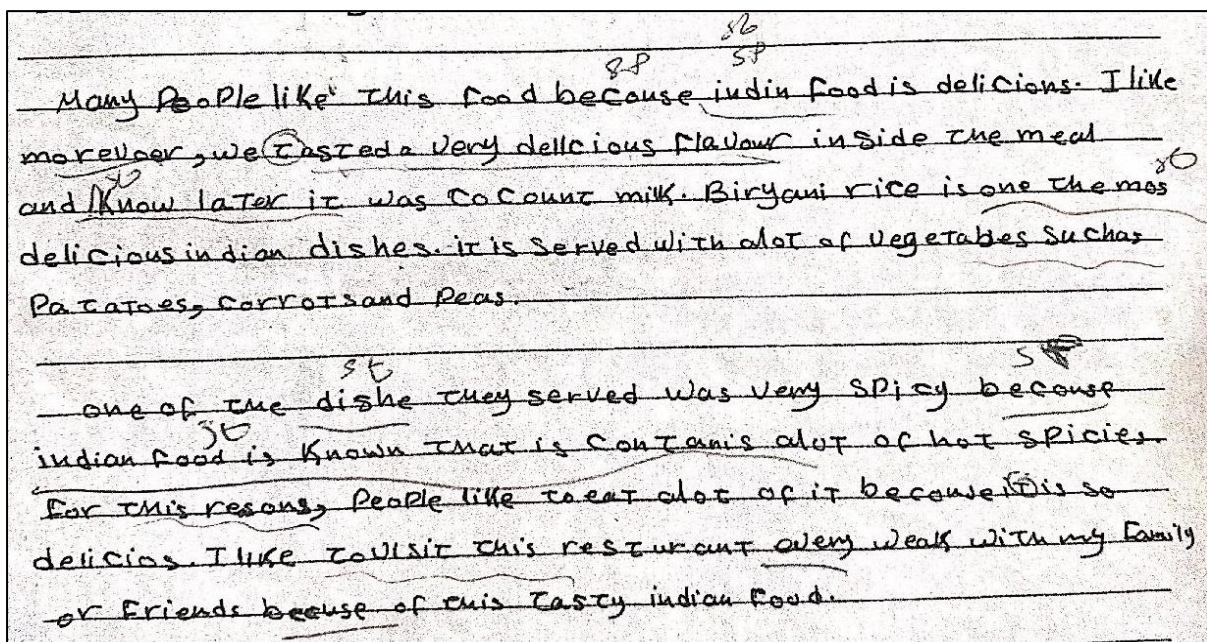


Figure 5-4: Noor's feedback practices

➤ **Focus on Organisation**

The second aspect on which teachers tended to focus when giving feedback on their students' essays concerned the issue of organisation. Both teachers paid attention to the organisation of the body of the essay, in particular by giving written directions on the number of sentences and how the coursework should be divided into three paragraphs, as shown in Figure 5-5, below.



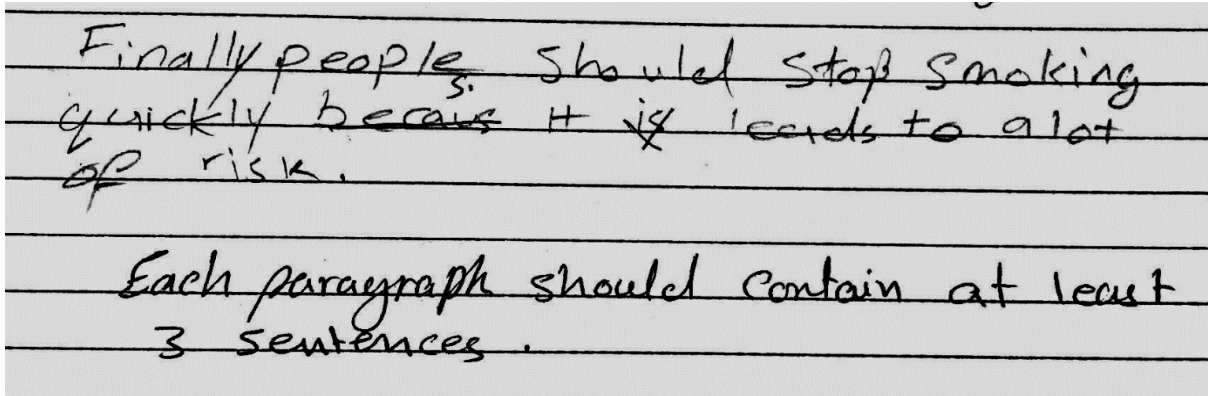


Figure 5-5: Sara's feedback on organisation

Noor also provided commentary feedback focusing on the organisation of the essay, particularly in relation to the use of topic sentences, as shown in Figure 5-6 below. The example in Figure 5-7 below concerns commentary feedback frequently provided by both teachers in relation to the organisation of the essay. The latter was in line with their practice of teaching writing, as explored in Section 5.2.1. This gives further indication that their primary focus when giving feedback concerned the organisation of the essay.

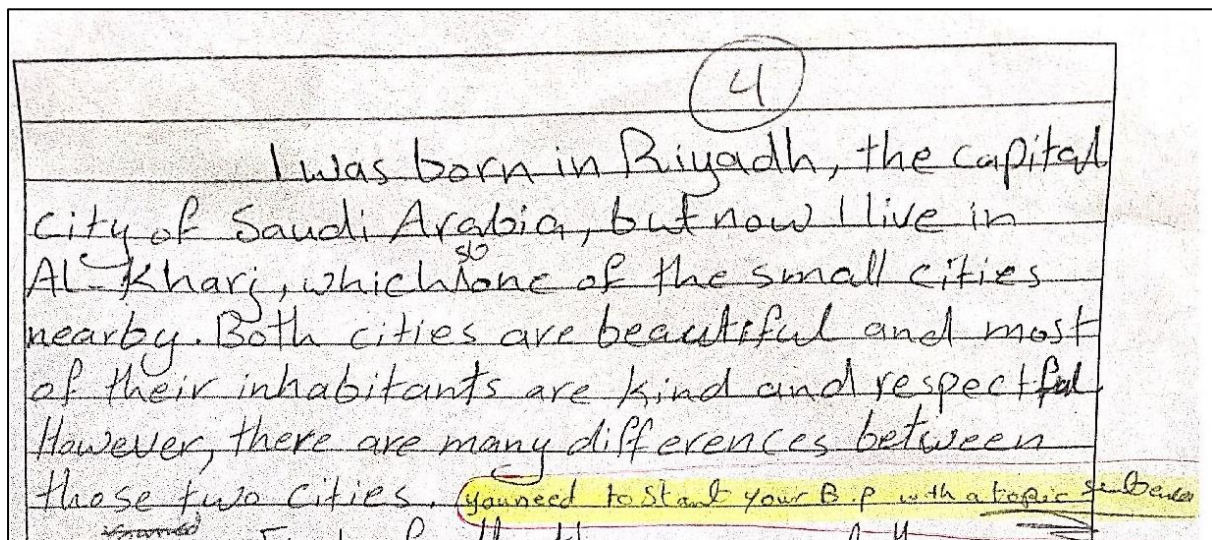


Figure 5-6: Noor's feedback on the use of topic sentences

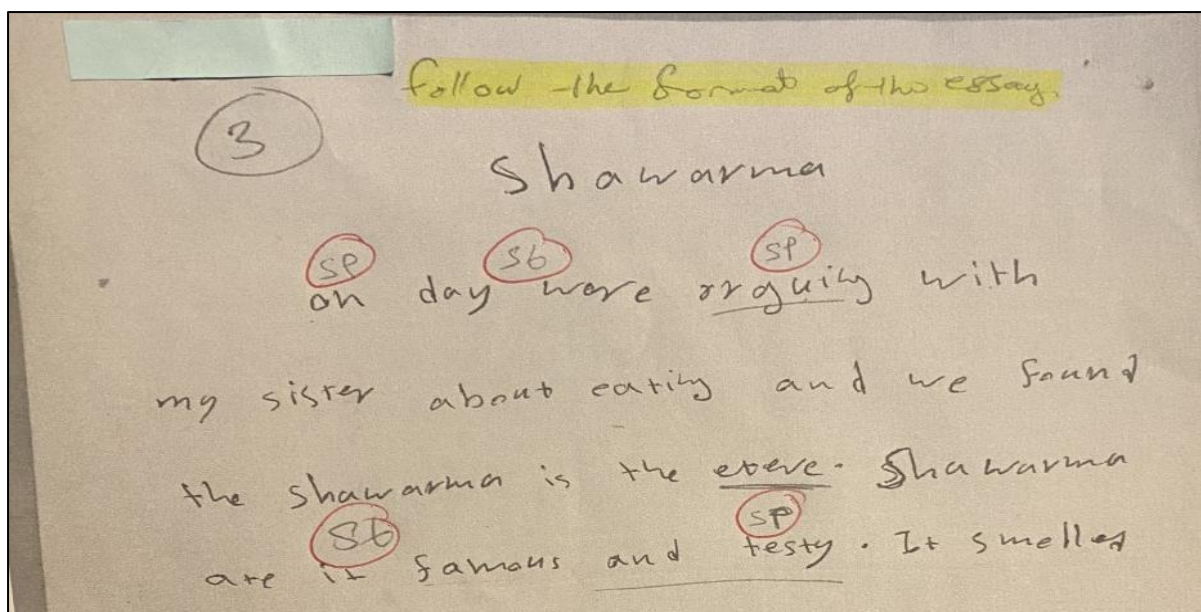


Figure 5-7: Noor's feedback on the format of the coursework

It is also evident that, when responding to organisational issues, the teachers provided direct comments indicating the actions they required of students. These consisted of sentences or phrases written in full, i.e. Sara's comment: "each paragraph should contain three sentences". Conversely, most of the feedback given on language form was written in error codes or indirect feedback. This finding suggests that teachers place considerable importance on clearly explaining any errors related to organisation, as they focused on their students' comprehension of these comments including (unlike for errors related to language) written feedback. The reason behind this practice is explored in relation to the section on the teachers' beliefs in the next theme. Although the teachers commented on the organisation of essays, they did not provide similar amount of written feedback when it came to content, as discussed in the following section.

### ➤ Focus on Content

Sara and Noor both focused on content in a different way to other aspects, primarily indicating when they felt a meaning or idea was unclear. For example, the

images in Figure 5-8 and Figure 5-9 show that the teachers used underlining and question marks to designate a lack of clarity of meaning.

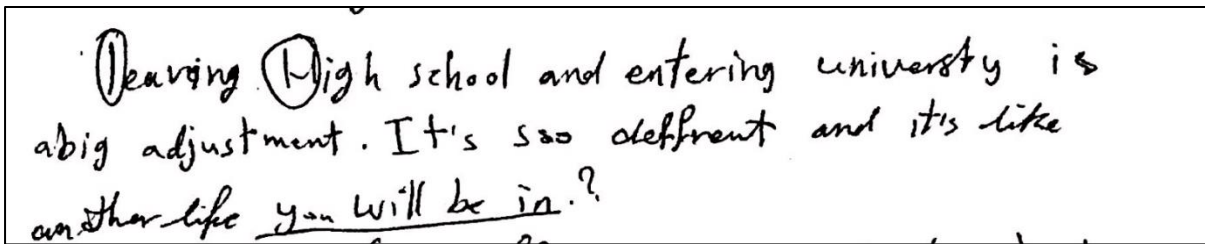


Figure 5-8: Sara's feedback on an unclear idea

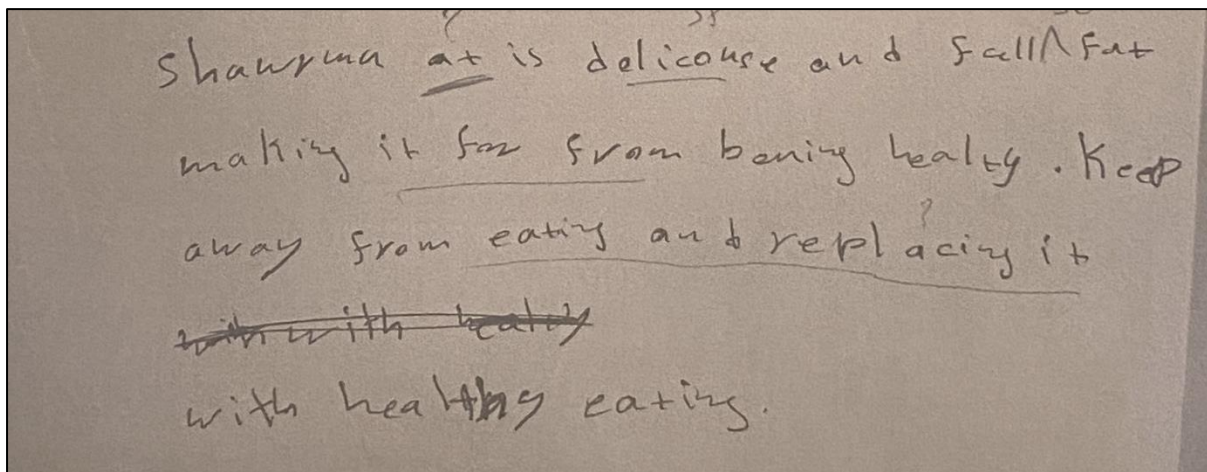


Figure 5-9: Noor's feedback concerning an unclear idea

When considering the types of feedback related to content and meaning, I found the teachers' approach to be fairly similar. On one text, Sara asked for supporting details (i.e. "try to write a detailed description"), as shown in Figure 5-10



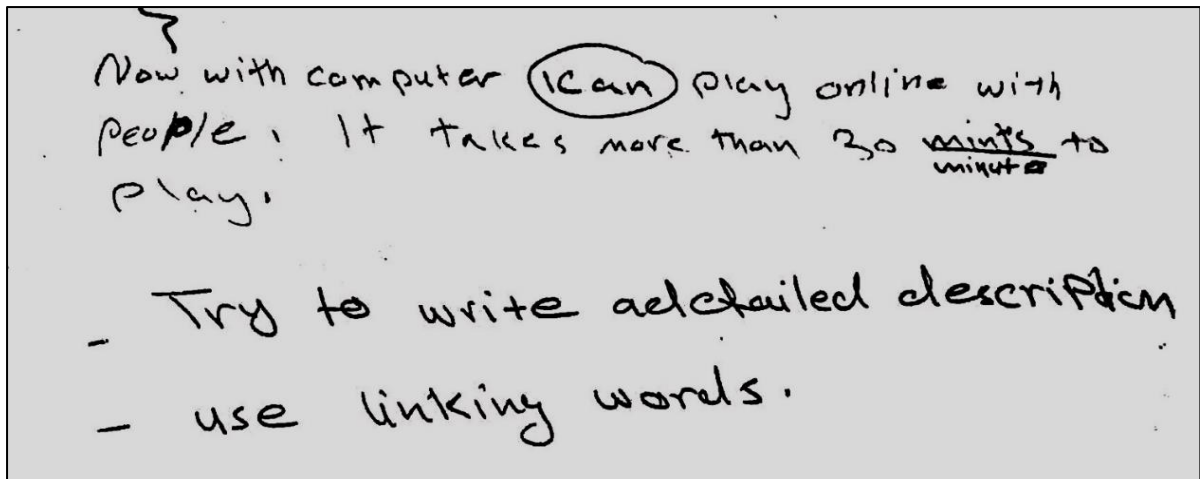


Figure 5-10: Sara's feedback on content

I noted that the frequency of giving feedback on content was less than that given on language form and organisation. In fact, the only feedback I found on content was those provided in the above figures. However, this is in contrast to the attention paid by the teachers to language form and organisation and their expectations for the essays they set as homework, as explored in the previous theme.

➤ **Focus on Mechanical Errors**

The final aspect on which teachers tended to focus when giving feedback on their students' essays concerned the issue of mechanical error such as spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, missing words, and space between words. Both Sara and Noor focused most of their attention on spelling on all students' written coursework. I noticed that Sara used different types of written feedback to indicate errors related to spelling and capitalisation such as direct and indirect feedback as shown in Figure 5-11.

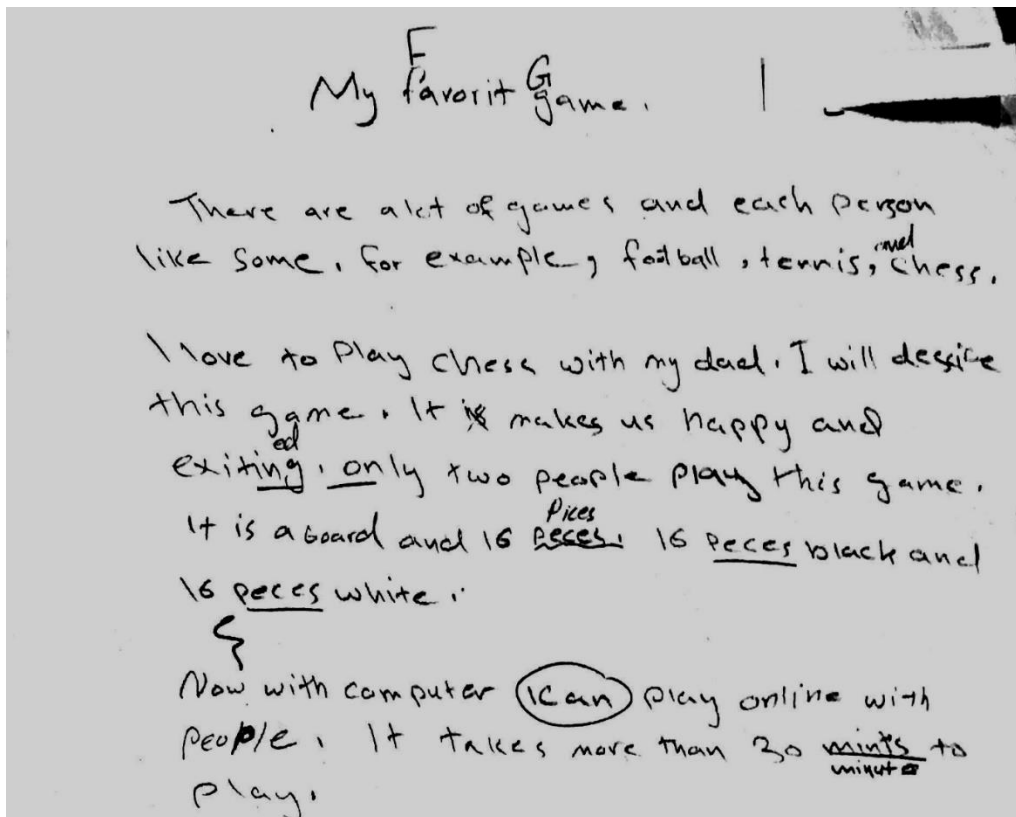


Figure 5-11: Sara's feedback on mechanical errors

On the other hand, the analysis of Noor's use of feedback types when focusing on language errors demonstrated that she primarily used underlining for capitalisation and error codes for spelling, for example (SP) as shown in Figure 5-12 .

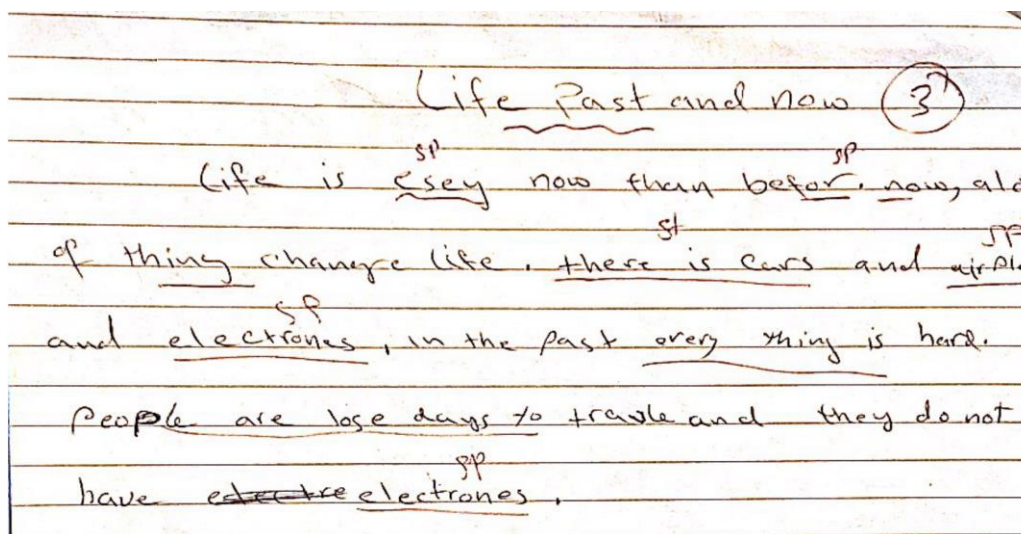


Figure 5-12: Noor's feedback on mechanical errors

The following section concludes the analysis of the data generated in relation to research question one: What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at the prince university?

In conclusion, the analysis presented in this section reveals that the EFL teachers in this recently established university context tended to follow a product-based approach to the delivering of feedback. This was demonstrated through the themes generated from the interviews with the teachers, as well as the written feedback on students' texts, which were focused on final outcomes. Thus, their feedback was given on the final written texts of students rather than throughout the development of the writing of these texts. For example, feedback focusing on the process of writing (i.e. drafting and revising) was not encouraged in the practices of teaching writing in this context.

Additionally, the analysis also revealed that the feedback was mainly provided in the form of written corrective feedback, focusing primarily on language form and organisation, with very little attention paid to content. Furthermore, the teachers' process of giving feedback was aligned with the practices they employed in teaching writing, which, as reported in the first theme, also followed a product-based approach. Therefore, this final-outcome focused feedback can be seen as being dictated by the practices employed for the teaching of writing.

This section explored the practices the teachers employed in the process of giving feedback, and their relation to the practices of teaching writing, while the following section provides a representation of the understandings and beliefs related to these practices from teachers' perspectives.

The teachers' answers to the questions related to the teaching of writing were insightful, not only in establishing their practice of teaching writing (including the different activities employed), but also in helping me to understand the influence of their teaching methods and activities on their practice of giving feedback.

### **5.3 Teachers' Understanding of Feedback and Beliefs Concerning Giving Feedback on Students' Coursework**

This section discusses the findings related to Research Question Two: 'What is the understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?'. These themes were generated mainly from the interviews conducted with the teachers. The findings are presented under four deductive and inductive themes, as shown in Figure 5-13 below. Firstly, the responsibility of providing feedback. Secondly, the focus of feedback: this explores teachers' understanding of the aspects they should emphasise when giving feedback on students' written texts. Thirdly, the importance of marking in encouraging students to pay attention to feedback; this covers the attitudes of teachers towards marking as a crucial tool for encouraging students' submission of their written texts and reading the feedback provided. Fourthly, the teachers' feedback preferences: this determines the teachers' preferences in relation to the type of feedback they provide for their students' written texts.

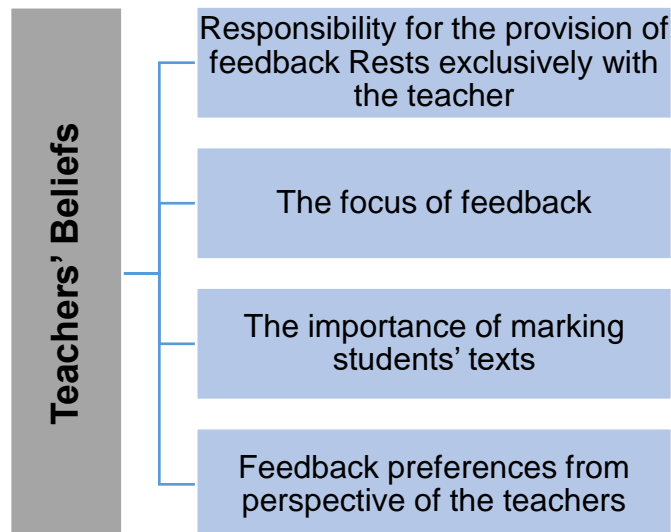


Figure 5-13: Teachers' beliefs about giving feedback

### 5.3.1 Responsibility for Feedback Provision Rests Exclusively with Teachers

In order to obtain a clearer picture of teachers' beliefs concerning the purpose of feedback, I questioned them on their motivation for giving feedback on their students' written texts. The interviews revealed that both teachers believed in the importance of feedback and that each student should receive feedback for a variety of different reasons. My analysis shows that both believed that it was their personal responsibility to deliver feedback, and that they held similar beliefs regarding why they should provide their students with such feedback:

It is my duty to mark and give feedback on each written text, to help students improve their writing and be aware of their errors ... I always try to write comments for students, so they can return to them when preparing for exams ... I think a large amount of feedback is useful for students, otherwise they may think they have not committed any errors. (Sara, Interview)

My job is to teach them and provide feedback because it's their right...Without feedback, students may not understand their errors and may think they do not have any; therefore, I have to indicate each error to notify them ... Feedback

helps students when they study for their exams ... Correcting errors is also important to enable me to improve my teaching awareness, as it allows me to find out the students' common errors, so I can focus on these while teaching writing. (Noor, Interview)

The above excerpts reveal that both teachers considered the provision of feedback as an obligation, believing that it was important for: first, raising students' awareness and highlighting their errors and second, offering a resource for revision for examinations. Noor also added that she personally benefited from the process, as it helped her to improve the focus of her teaching. Furthermore, both Sara and Noor demonstrated similar beliefs regarding the amount of feedback they should provide on their students' written texts. As shown above, they both considered that little or no written feedback could lead to students concluding they had no (or fewer) errors and that feedback was the only means of highlighting the existence of such errors. This was an observation born out during my analysis of the feedback provided on the nineteen pieces of written coursework, which focused on pointing out errors, but lacked a single positive comment concerning their writing strengths.

### 5.3.2 The Focus of Feedback

The teachers also tended to focus on the same aspects when providing their students with feedback on their final written coursework, which consisted of firstly, use of language and secondly, organisation.

I do not care about the expression of ideas and opinions, because they differ from one student to another. What's important to me is that they follow the genre required in the homework. For example, if a comparative essay is required, students should use comparison-related vocabulary and structures. Giving feedback that focuses on language form and organisation is one of the main textbook objectives I tend to follow. (Sara, Interview)

I indicate each error while reading the essays, whether it is an error of language or of organisation. It is also very important to point out errors of spelling and sentence structure, because students are not allowed to use a dictionary in the examination and therefore they need to pay attention to these aspects. I find spelling a common problem among students, which I point out to help them to improve. (Noor, Interview)

The above quotations reveal that the teachers' understanding of the required focus of their feedback concurred with their practice, as presented in Section 5.2.2.3. In addition, Sara justified her understanding by highlighting the importance of following textbook objectives, while Noor considered that she needed to focus on spelling and sentence structure, due to this being a common issue for her students. However, although textbook objectives are designed to develop the process of writing when giving feedback, both teachers generally prioritised the use of language and organisation, while neglecting content. Once again, this prioritising of specific aspects is in line with their practice, as discussed above. Thus, both teachers can be seen to focus on helping students to develop their language proficiency through the correction of language form and developing the organisation of their texts.

### 5.3.3 The Importance of Marking Students' Coursework to Encourage Attention to Feedback

As previously discussed in relation to the practices of teaching writing in this context, this study found marking an important area of difference when it came to the weightage of scores. This section examines the teachers' beliefs concerning the significance of marking students' written texts as a crucial tool to encourage them submit their work and read the feedback.

My interviews with both teachers revealed that they shared an assumption of their students' willingness to read their feedback, and the importance of marking texts, as reflected in the following:

Students submit the homework just for the scores. I allocate 1 mark for each coursework [3% in total for all coursework], so that students who do not submit will not lose too many marks ... two or three students care about improving their writing, but generally they submit simply to achieve the scores. (Sara, Interview)

I allocate scores with my feedback to encourage student to notice their error and read the correction form and read the feedback if I have written any, to know why I have given a specific score. I find that students do not generally care about feedback if there are no scores, and I feel none of them would submit their work if the homework was simply for the purposes of improvement. (Noor, Interview)

As discussed in the first theme of teachers' practice of marking (in which scores were found to be weighted differently between Sara's and Noor's classes), the students in this study had all submitted their three required pieces of coursework during the semester. Thus, the students' level of submission appears to conform to their teachers' conviction that marking forms an important motivator. The data regarding students' response to the feedback is explored in Section 5.5.1, under the students' perspectives.

Additionally, the excerpts from both teachers revealed that they considered that scores motivated their students to submit their coursework. Furthermore, Noor felt that marks and feedback are interrelated, resulting in her employing feedback to justify the mark for her students, as well as to assist them to avoid repeating the same errors in future coursework. Sara, who only gives one mark per submission regardless of the number of errors students make, also believed that scores motivated students to



submit. Both teachers seem to have the same opinion about students' main motivation to submit work, although Sara stated a few students submit their coursework to benefit from teachers' feedback and improve their writing competence. As previously discussed, the teachers' views appear to have been primarily shaped by their attitude towards the interest shown by their students in receiving feedback on their written coursework.

### 5.3.4 Feedback Preferences

The interviews with both teachers also explored their preferences when it came to types of feedback. Unlike the other sub-themes (in which teachers tended to express similar beliefs), this section examines their differences in relation to feedback preferences. The data revealed several preferences and levels of understanding concerning three types of feedback, as discussed in detail below, these being: (1) teacher-student conferencing (i.e., oral feedback); (2) written feedback; and (3) peer feedback.

#### 5.3.4.1 Teacher-Student Conferencing (Oral Feedback)

Teachers were asked about the teacher-student conferencing on students' writing; therefore, this section presents how EFL writing teachers view this type of feedback. Although both teachers expressed a preference for teacher-student conferencing, practically neither teacher engages in teacher-student conferencing in which they talk to students individually about their own coursework. Sara offers oral feedback only upon students' requests because she replaces it with group discussion where she orally explains repeated errors made by her students in the classroom to all students (i.e., classroom oral feedback). Students who do not prefer to engage during this group feedback can request one-to-one feedback. However, Noor offers

this feedback to all students as she believes that is to encourage students to ask, but no students, during the semester where data was collected, asked for this feedback.

I use oral discussions [classroom oral feedback] with the whole class for recurring errors... individual oral feedback is more effective for some students, who do not prefer group oral feedback. In addition, a few students come to my office and ask about their corrections (Sara, Interview)

I prefer one-to-one oral feedback, because it encourages my students to ask questions, but this semester no one asked me at all about their feedback. So, I have found it [classroom oral feedback] more effective to explain the main repeated errors during the lesson, particularly as they generally do not read the written comments I have provided on their essays. (Noor, Interview)

Additionally, Sara stated that she believed in the effectiveness of individual teacher-student conferences, particularly to accommodate the needs of those less inclined to participate in classroom discussion. On the other hand, Noor considered classroom oral feedback to be more effective for her students, due to seeing them as provoking less anxiety. Therefore, it would be fair to say that both teachers did not neglect students' writing errors and treated errors by using different methods (i.e., classroom oral feedback) by means of which errors were corrected and explained on how to improve their writing accuracy. However, I observed that, although both teachers preferred individual teacher-student conferencing, they were prevented from pursuing this preference due to the problem that seems to be connected to the fact that the multiple-draft process writing approach is not followed, despite the recommendations and guidelines of the textbook to adopt a process-based approach. The findings, then, substantiate the initial problem: the number of students in the classroom which has led teachers to use classroom oral feedback. The reality is that, due to this constraint, EFL writing teachers are facing challenges to use multiple types

of feedback including teacher-student conferencing to enable students' written texts to be both correct and appropriate. Several factors also observed to prevent teachers to practice the teacher-student conferencing and replace it by group conferencing which will be presented in section 5.4.

#### 5.3.4.2 Written Feedback

The teachers were questioned about their preference for written feedback, due to this being the main type of feedback observed as being given in this study. Both teachers responded that they preferred to use this type, although each described different ways of delivering written feedback on students' texts, as reflected in the following extracts.

I use direct feedback as it is easier for students and usually, I do not prefer underlining or circling, because it takes time for the student to understand, and my purpose is to teach the student the correct form...but again this saves me time when providing feedback, especially when the errors are minor, such as spelling or punctuation. (Sara, Interview)

I prefer to write detailed comments, but I find that my students never read the feedback. So, now I just indicate errors to justify their scores, as they are only interested in their scores ... Direct or indirect feedback is not enough, as it should be followed by one-to-one feedback. (Noor, interview)

The excerpts above indicate that Sara preferred direct written feedback, as this facilitated her students' understanding of her comments. She also reported her dislike for indirect feedback, due to doubting her students' capacity to understand. However, as explored earlier in the first theme concerning teachers' feedback, she made use of indirect feedback, justifying this as saving her time. On the other hand, Noor expressed a preference for making detailed comments, but she also acknowledged that she did not reflect this in her practice, due to her perceptions of her students' engagement with

feedback, as explored in detail in Section 5.4.3.2. Moreover, she also stated that she believed in a combination of direct or indirect written and one-to-one oral feedback. This is in line with the views presented in the previous section in relation to one-to-one feedback, despite the challenges preventing this from taking place in practice. As noted above, these are further discussed in the following theme.

#### 5.3.4.3 Peer Feedback

I also explored the teachers' perception of peer feedback with the study participants. This section therefore examines the teachers' beliefs concerning this type of feedback, in order to gain an insight into their understanding of its use in this EFL university context.

During the interviews, both teachers expressed clear views of the lack of any benefit they felt their students would gain from peer feedback:

I do not think students are able to correct each other's errors; I cannot expect much from them because of their lack of language competence ... although they do help each other with essays and textbook exercises, giving feedback is not practiced ... they are not familiar with peer-feedback. (Sara, Interview)

My students work in peer groups in the classroom during the brainstorming and building sentences stages, which I consider as peer feedback ... However, essays should be corrected by me, it is my responsibility ... Peer-feedback would be useless in my class because I do not think the students would do it. (Noor, Interview)

This demonstrates that neither teacher believes in the importance of peer feedback and nor did they expect it from their students. In addition, both offered differing explanations of why they did not expect, or encourage, their students to engage in such feedback. Sara justified this through her students' lack of familiarity with this type of feedback, as well as their low level of language proficiency. Noor, on

the other hand, attributed her unwillingness as being due to considering her students would fail to engage in the process, as well as her belief that feedback was her sole responsibility. This returns to the main perspective discussed in Section 5.3.1, indicating the teachers generally viewed feedback as their personal responsibility. In this regard, both teachers assumed a position of authority when it came to giving feedback on students' written texts, by viewing their students as receivers, because students lack the ability to participate in the process of giving feedback. This accords with the teachers' practices of teaching writing, as discussed in Section 5.2.1, which tends to be a teacher-centred approach, therefore limiting the role played by students.

In conclusion, this section has presented four sub-themes concerning the teachers' understanding of the benefits of given feedback on their students' written work. The discussion revealed that these beliefs mostly align with their practice of teaching writing and giving feedback. However, a number were found to diverge including as a result of the teachers' attitudes towards students' interest and engagement with feedback. These aspects are explored through the next theme, which I developed through my analysis of the various datasets, primarily in relation to the interviews with the teachers, the students' coursework and the examination papers. This theme is presented in the following section.

#### **5.4 Factors Influencing Teachers' Process of Giving Feedback**

As noted in the previous section, my analysis of the datasets generated an inductive theme concerning the factors prompting teachers' beliefs and practices in giving feedback. This section explores these factors and their relation to the aspects discussed in the two previous themes. This theme covers three sub-themes: Firstly, contextual factors: these include time constraints and the large number of students in

each class, as well as the lack of departmental policy and guidelines concerning appropriate types of assessment. Secondly, the impact of the types of errors committed on the teachers' choice of feedback: this explores how types of errors made by students in their written texts have shaped their practice of giving feedback. Thirdly, teachers' attitudes towards students' competence, which also examines the response of the latter to any feedback provided. These factors are outlined in Figure 5-14 and discussed in detail below.

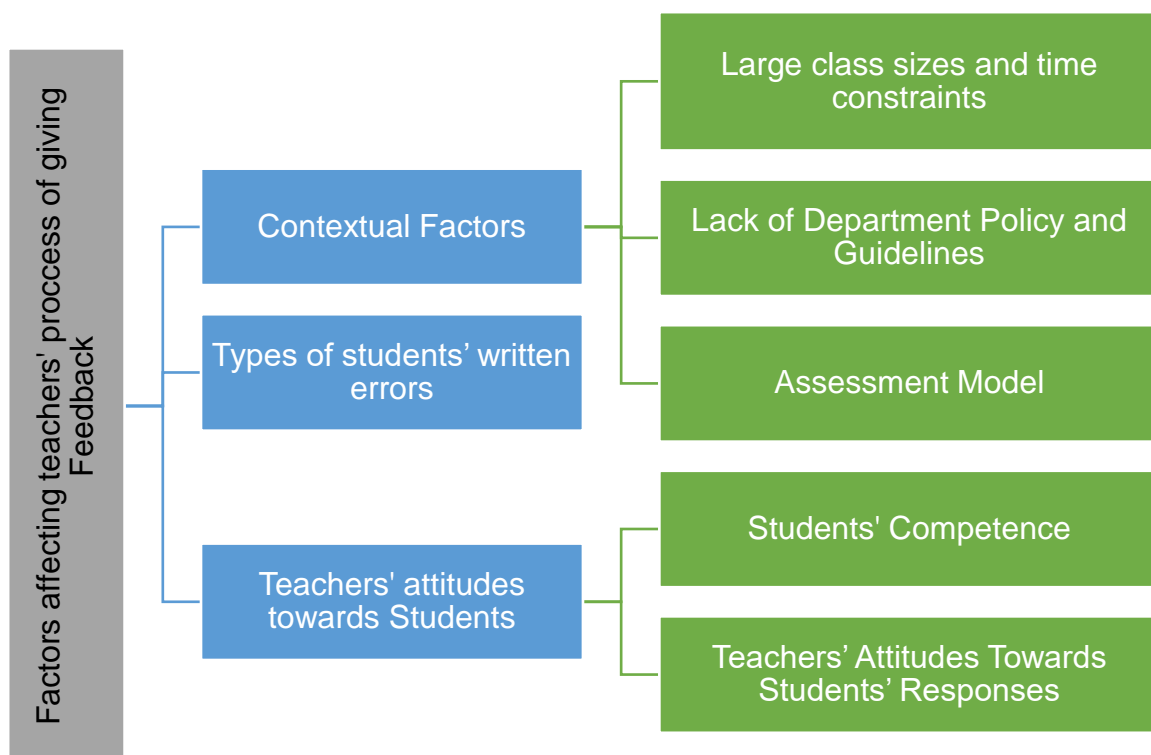


Figure 5-14: Factors influencing teachers' process of giving feedback

### 5.4.1 Contextual Factors

As introduced above, my analysis of the different datasets generated for this study identified a number of contextual factors highlighting the challenges impacting on the practice of teaching writing in general, and the process of giving feedback in particular. This was crucial for the provision of a detailed contextual picture of the

conditions under which these teachers are operating, as discussed in the current section.

#### 5.4.1.1 Large Class Sizes and Time Constraints

One challenge the teachers highlighted concerned the size of their classes, which prevented them from providing both detailed written feedback and one-to-one oral feedback. This was particularly significant given the limited time available to provide feedback to a large number of students.

If the number of students had been smaller, I could have been able to help them improve and I could have given more feedback and also engaged them in one-to-one oral feedback. But students are disadvantaged in this regard, because I have fifty-two students in one class, and I have only three hours of lectures per week. This means I am unable to set higher expectations for them. (Noor, Interview)

Similarly, Sara, who had thirty-five students in her writing class, alluded to the issue of time constraints when giving feedback, stating that she:

do[es] not provide written commentaries on each and every text, in order to save time... I understand that large classes for sure affect the process of teaching and learning writing, but I try to manage, and I feel what I am doing fits this situation. (Sara, Interview)

These factors could explain the teachers' reliance on the product-based approach, which can be seen as dictating their focus on providing feedback only on the final outcome of students' writing. This indicates the significance of highlighting these contextual factors and observing their impact on teachers' practice of teaching writing and giving feedback. It also demonstrates that these practices and beliefs do not exist in a vacuum, but that it is important to view them in terms of the teachers' lived realities in this particular context.

#### 5.4.1.2 Lack of Departmental Policies and Guidelines

A further contextual factor identified through the interviews with the teachers concerned the lack of departmental policies and guidelines for the teaching of writing and giving the relevant feedback. This was partially explored in Section 5.2.1.3, in which teachers reported lacking a set of criteria for assessing students' written texts.

Noor noted that:

the department does not require teachers to respond to students' writing in specific ways and does not provide us with any guidelines to follow, I do what I think is appropriate for the students, we have a textbook which we are required to achieve the objective... we are not required to apply any specific teaching methods. (Noor, Interview)

From my interview with Noor, it became clear that the departmental policies and guidelines lacked any criteria concerning the giving of feedback on students' written work. On one hand, this interview implies a top-down policy approach to the completion of teachers' tasks while, on the other, it infers that the teachers remain to some extent free when it comes to their practice. However, it could be argued that, within the context of this study, this freedom failed to result in teachers' complete autonomy to teach according to their convictions, particularly in relation to the teaching of writing and giving feedback. Furthermore, this did not ensure that teachers were fully supported throughout the process of giving feedback. This was clarified when the teachers discussed their professional training in the teaching of writing and giving feedback, with both teachers reporting that they lacked any formal training or guidance. Noor commented on this issue when discussing her duties regarding assessment and the giving of feedback:

We are not required to provide feedback in any particular way... there is no professional training to improve our response to the teaching of writing, with



each lecturer responsible for their own subject matter. This is why I continue to consult with my colleague in the men's department regarding this course, mainly in relation to teaching methods and marking, because he teaches the same year [i.e., year four] and also because exams are identical for females and male. (Noor, Interview)

This reveals the lack of support for lecturers from the English Department and that this has led them to seek informal support in order to create their own guidelines and to assist their practice. However, when I consulted the department's objectives, they clearly stated that the department was: "offering in-service academic and professional training programmes for faculty members" (PU,2020). This could be as a result of these being newly established universities, in which employee development remains an ongoing process. However, teachers considered the choice of feedback methods to be their duty to seek improvement on it by their own way:

This is my job, and I should be the one who knows the most about this stuff [i.e. marking and giving feedback], but if we need help to improve our practice of assessing and giving feedback, we return to our Head of Department, so she can guide us and clarify any issue we are concerned about. (Sara, Interview)

Sara confirmed the existence of a lack of training courses and guidelines for giving feedback, particularly as she tended to approach the Head of Department when she needed support. This indicates that the lack of training and support for teachers could explain their feedback practices, as well as this contributing to the non-standardised practice of giving feedback identified in this study.

#### 5.4.1.3 Assessment Model

As discussed previously in Section 5.2.1.3, the final examination represents half of the module weightage (i.e. 50% of the module overall score), thus making it a significant assessment for which teachers need to prepare their students when giving

feedback on their coursework. In this particular context, there is a specific type of examination and questions focused on language form, writing structure, and essay genre (see Appendix 11). As noted above, the teachers generally focused on language forms and essay organisation, i.e., to include three paragraphs, representing the introduction, body and conclusion. Some of the final examination questions are shown in Figure 5-15 and Figure 5-16, demonstrating that these clearly require knowledge of language form (see Appendix 11, for the full sample of the examination paper for Year Three).

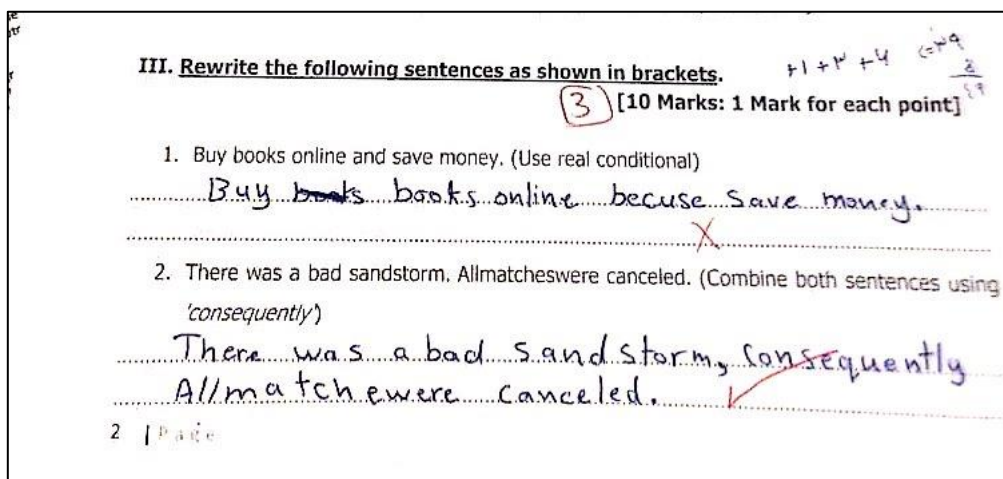


Figure 5-15: Sara's final examination paper (Year Three)

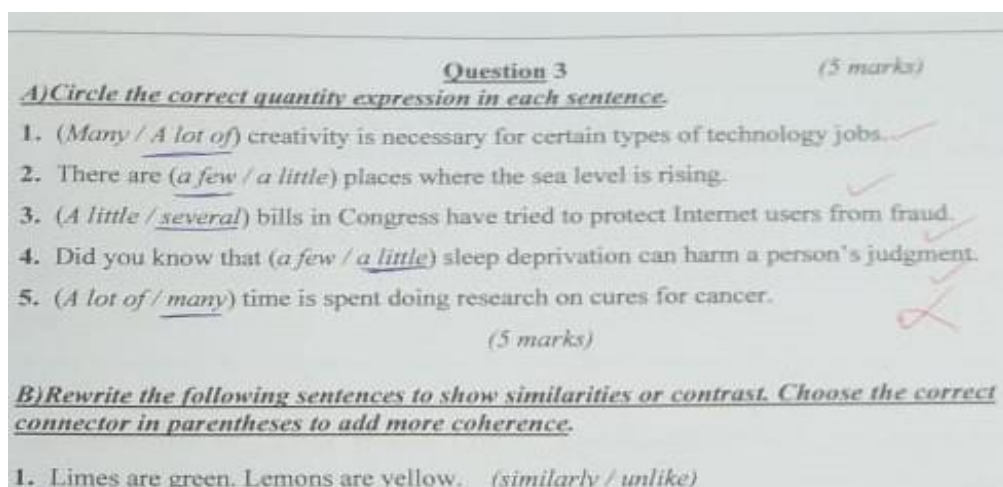


Figure 5-16: Noor's final examination paper (Year Four)

As reflected in their interviews and feedback, both teachers focused on assisting their students to answer the questions in the examination. Sara reported that:

I always try to write comments on students' coursework, so they can return to them when preparing for exams, as they will be required to produce an essay in the exam which has similar requirements regarding the use of paragraphs and sentences. (Sara, Interview)

My analysis of Sara's written feedback on her students' coursework revealed that she also provided comments on language form, as shown in the example discussed in Section [5.2.2.3](#).

Additionally, Noor stated that:

Feedback helps students when they study for their exams...spelling and sentence structure are very important to indicate [when giving feedback] because students are not allowed to use a dictionary in the examination. This is why I keep emphasising this aspect in their coursework...students do not receive any feedback after the final exam, they just receive their final mark. (Noor, Interview)

Thus, as a washback, it can be clearly observed that this type of assessment assumes that students have grasped the use of both language and organisation, so dictating that teachers focus on providing feedback primarily on these aspects of writing.

The above discussion indicates that these contextual realities were found to impact on teachers' practice of giving feedback. In the following section, I examine a further factor related to teachers' feedback practices, this time related to the types of errors made by students in their final written texts.

### 5.4.2 Types of Students' Written Errors

Throughout my analysis of my interviews with the teachers and their feedback on written texts, I noted their feedback was influenced by the types of errors made by students as shown in Figure 5-17 and Figure 5-18. These figures reveal that both teachers gave written commentary instructing their students on the organisation of essays, while employing error codes for errors related to spelling and the use of tenses, including providing the correct form. The teachers' choice of feedback can therefore be seen as being influenced by the types of errors in their students' work, i.e., feedback on organisation took the form of commentary, whereas underlining was used for sentences that required rephrasing.

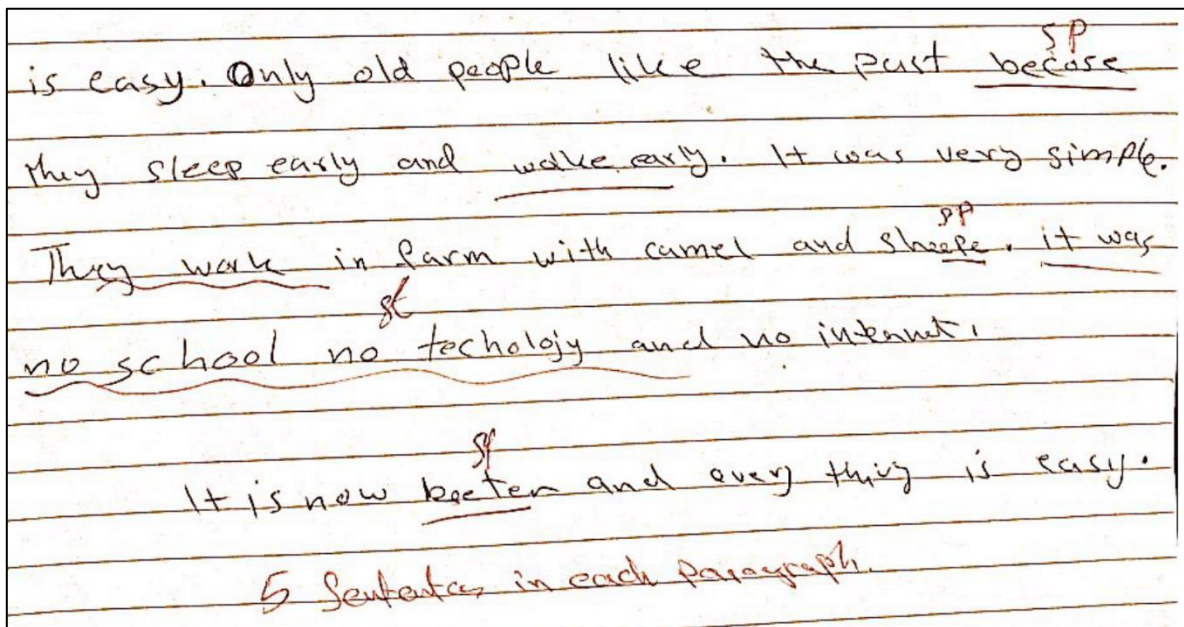


Figure 5-17: Example of WCF on form and organisation by Noor

High School And University.

Leaving High school and entering university is a big adjustment. It's so different and it's like another life you will be in.?

I can tell <sup>S.</sup>~~Some~~<sub>Some</sub> differences between high school and university as follows:

- classes are usually larger than those in high school and there are more ~~many~~ students on the university campus.
- Students are responsible for making their own class and following them conscientiously.
- Students are taking notes independently.

That is some <sup>sc</sup>~~different~~<sub>noun</sub> and there are some I didn't tell. But it's a nice life to be <sup>an</sup> independent person.

Figure 5-18: Example of WCF on form and content by Sara

The feedback from the teachers' interviews confirmed the results of the analysis of their feedback on students' written texts, as indicated by Sara and Noor:

I choose to put indirect feedback when errors are minor, or for recurring errors, to notify the student, as some errors like spelling or punctuation do not need to be explained ... I use commentary feedback when I need to highlight something students had failed to do. (Sara, Interview)

Language errors come first, I should indicate them. Errors on organisation are also important to give feedback on but I will not repeat the same feedback on organisation for each paper, I just mention it in one word or sentence without mentioning exactly what went wrong and what to do. (Noor, interview)

In addition, both Sara and Noor reported using 'oral discussion' (i.e. group feedback in the classroom following the students being given their written feedback on their coursework), to discuss any recurring errors. Section 5.3.4.1 reveals that both teachers expressed their preference for oral feedback in groups rather than on a one-to-one basis, in particular due to the recurring types of errors found in their students'

written texts. This could be considered an effective method for dealing with large classes, being a time saving means of delivering their feedback on a one-to-one basis. My examination of the students' coursework, and the interviews with the teachers, both demonstrated that the types of feedback employed by the teachers tended to be dependent on the form of errors found in their students' written work, regardless of their own personal preferences. In addition, it related to the teachers' attitudes towards their students, as discussed in the following section.

### 5.4.3 Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students

As noted earlier, the teachers' attitudes towards their students, and in particular their opinion of students' competence and ability to respond to feedback, were identified as impacting on their feedback practices. This current section explores this aspect in detail. Firstly, I consider how teachers' views of the competence of their students influence their choice of certain types of feedback, i.e., peer feedback. Secondly, I explore teachers' attitudes towards students' response to their feedback.

#### 5.4.3.1 Students' Competence

The issue of students' competence frequently arose during my interview with Sara, particularly as she considered a lack of competence in her year three students to have prevented her from employing peer feedback, as discussed in Section 5.3.4.3. Sara reported: "I do not think students are able to correct each other's errors; I cannot expect much from them because of their language competence". Noor also discussed the impact of her students' lack of competence on her use of L1 (i.e. Arabic) when communicating oral feedback in the classroom, noting that: "students are shy to approach me because they do not want to speak English with me, so I allow them to



ask in Arabic. This worked, as they started discussing the feedback in Arabic and take notes”.

As shown in the analysis of teachers’ expectations of their students in Section [5.2.1.2](#), Noor also highlighted the importance of teachers’ attitude towards the competence of their students:

Most of the students do not know how to use ideas, which I consider the biggest problem. Their ideas are also limited, which means they do not know how to express themselves and they therefore find it problematic to write academically ... Spelling is the most common problem amongst students, and they always make errors in this area. (Noor, Interview)

This demonstrates the views of the teachers concerning the problems faced by their students. It is noticeable that Noor categorised these into three areas: firstly, a lack of ideas; secondly, difficulties with expression and writing academically; and thirdly, surface level errors. Noor highlighted this last as a major problem, which is thus explored in more detail in the following section.

#### 5.4.3.2 Teachers’ Attitudes Towards Students’ Responses

As noted in the previous section, this study found the teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ responses as being influential when it came to their provision of feedback, as discussed below.

The first attitude was in relation to a lack of response to feedback. Noor, for example, commented on how this influenced her use of oral and written feedback.

They never ask for the meaning of the error codes I provide on their feedback; that is why I explain it to them in the classroom...I always invite them to ask me about the feedback I provide, but they never do. For example, during this

semester, no one asked me. That is why I explain the recurring errors on the board. (Noor, Interview)

Although part of the teacher's role is to explain the feedback system and error codes employed, the above reveals that her students' lack of response impacted on the methods used by Noor to explain these systems. As also shown through her preference for written feedback, as discussed in Section 5.3.4.2, Noor wished to offer 'detailed comments' to her students. However, this was also impeded by the students' response, as she felt that: "they do not read the written comments provided on their essays". Furthermore, in response to her students only writing a single draft, she noted that:

They only care about submitting and receiving their score. For example, last year, I used detailed written feedback to develop their writing because I found my students were responsive to my feedback. But this semester I have found that students only care about their scores...so I feel I have no need to give more comments, I just indicate errors to justify their scores, as they only ask about scores. (Noor, Interview)

As noted earlier in the analysis of the teachers' feedback, part of their motivation was to justify the scores given to their students. The above comment by Noor shows that she was also influenced by her belief in her students' complete lack of engagement with her written commentaries.

The second attitude was articulated by Sara, who stated that she was motivated by her students' response to her feedback. For example, she responded to the question concerning the kind of response she tends to experience by noting: "some students try to rewrite and ask again and again about their writing errors, which motivates me to give them further explanation because I am here to teach and tell". This indicates that Sara was influenced by her students' reactions, and so provided



initial feedback to students, offering clarification upon request, including oral feedback. Clearly, the responses from her students shaped her provision of oral discussions. This was also reflected in Noor's comments concerning her students' reaction to her feedback, i.e. "if a student asks about my comments, or seeks clarification, of course I am happy to explain, I always encourage them to do so".

This demonstrates that teachers tend to be influenced by students' response to their feedback. Thus, the factors explored in this current section were identified as exerting an influence on teachers' feedback practices. Although teachers tended to offer support and individual student-teacher conferences, they claimed that students do not show an interest in asking for clarifications when they experience difficulties or lack of understanding. However, it is not possible to establish a detailed picture, or generate a nuanced understanding, of the process of giving feedback in this EFL context, without considering the perspective of the students. The following sections therefore explore the students' expectations and preferences in relation to their teachers' feedback, both prior to, and following, receiving feedback on their first item of coursework.

## **5.5 Students' Expectations of Teacher's Feedback**

In accordance with its constructivist design, this study also examined the students' perspective of the process of giving feedback, to enable a more in-depth understanding of this process. One area of exploration during the data collection phase concerned students' expectations and preferences prior to receiving feedback on their first piece of coursework. I therefore formed the third research question in this study to guide this investigation: 'What are the EFL students' expectations of

their teachers' feedback?'. The data generated to address this question were analysed, resulting in three inductive themes, as presented in the Figure 5-19 below.

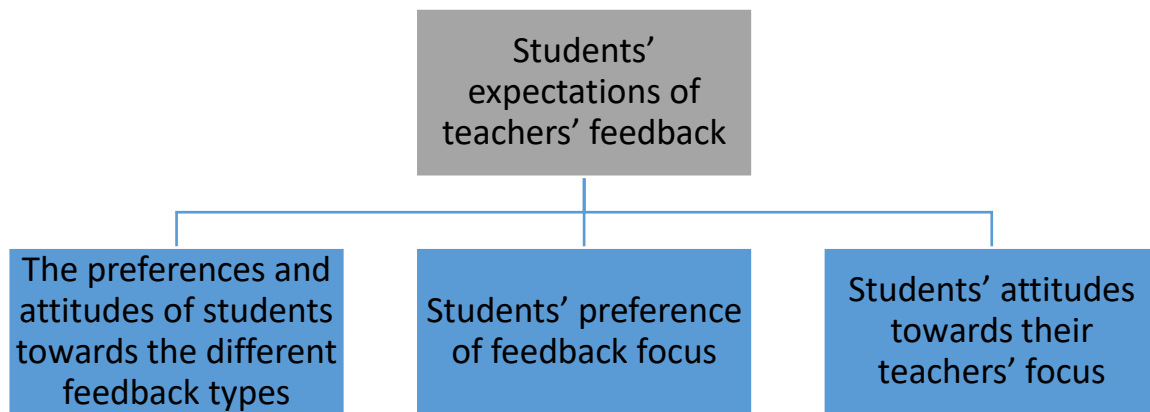


Figure 5-19: Inductive themes concerning feedback

These themes are explored in detail in the following three sections.

### 5.5.1 The Preferences and Attitudes of Students Towards the Different Feedback Types

As noted above, this section considers the students' preferences concerning the different types of feedback. The data from the research generated three deductive sub-themes in relation to: Firstly, students' preferences regarding written feedback, which analyses their views of the value of receiving written feedback, including preferences regarding written feedback types and what their teacher should focus on when giving feedback. Secondly, my analysis of their attitudes towards receiving feedback from their peers. Thirdly, my analysis of students' attitudes towards oral feedback.

Table 5-8 below demonstrates the evidence from students' interviews in relation to the first sub-theme, i.e., students' preference regarding different types of written feedback.

Table 5-8: Students' preference regarding different types of written feedback

Students		Preference
Year:3	Jodi	"I prefer corrective feedback...I want to have many comments...I mean specific comments of what to do and what is wrong with my writing."
	Kloud	"I think there is no need for feedback, because my scores will not be changed...but when it comes to feedback preferences, yes, I prefer direct correction for all my errors, so I can understand my errors and see what the corrected form should be."
	Lina	"Yes, I prefer written corrective feedback more than other kinds, because I want to know my errors directly from the teacher and then rewrite my texts."
Year:4	Hana	"I prefer to receive an indication of my errors and a written explanation, because I would not understand what the indication means without the correction."
	Asma	"I do not want underlining. I prefer to correct the error rather than explore what the error might be...This makes it easier to understand my errors and corrections when I study for the exam."
	Maha	"I prefer underlining of each error and written information concerning the type of error."

These extracts from most of the students' interviews show that they were in agreement when it came to the value of written feedback, albeit for a number of different reasons. In addition, they articulated their preferences for different types of written feedback, with the majority preferring direct corrective feedback, as they related it to the importance of understanding their errors. In addition, Year Four students Hana and Maha expressed a preference for indirect feedback, combined with a written comment (i.e., combination of indirect and metalinguistic feedback as

outlined in Chapter 3, Table 3-1). Jodi also expressed a preference for written commentary, although she preferred this to be instructional, including indicating ways she can improve her writing. Kloud, however, stated that she considered feedback irrelevant, as it fails to improve her score. However, she did indicate her preference for receiving direct feedback so that she is able to understand her errors.

The data revealed three reasons for students’ preferences in relation to written feedback. Firstly, Asma considered it a resource for preparing for examinations. Secondly, Lina viewed it as a valuable resource from the teacher, enabling her to improve her future writing. Finally, they considered that it helped them to understand their errors. These reasons match the teachers’ views of the purpose of feedback (see Section 5.3.1), including the benefits of written feedback. This clearly demonstrates the interconnection between the views of both teachers and students.

The following section presents students’ attitudes towards peer feedback. Table 5-9 below evidences these attitudes by means of extracts from the interviews with the students.

Table 5-9: Students' attitude towards peer feedback

Students		Students’ Extracts (peer feedback)
Year:3	Jodi	“They are students like me, who benefit from the teacher’s feedback. So why should I ask them, when we all need the teacher’ feedback, not that of our peers?”
	Kloud	“I do not think I would ask my peers for feedback on the coursework; each one is responsible for her own homework.”
	Lina	“No, we do not ask each other to correct the coursework, but we discuss the topic together before writing it.”

<b>Year:4</b>	Hana	“Each student is responsible for her coursework, none of us show it to our friends... the teacher did not ask us to correct the coursework of our peers.”
	Asma	“We do not do peer feedback; I think it is difficult for us to correct grammar errors or write comments. We trust our teacher’s comments.”
	Maha	“I might ask a student who is excellent in the classroom to help me, but generally we do not correct the coursework of our peers.”

These extracts clearly demonstrate that the majority of the students did not consider peer feedback to be beneficial, considering their teachers to be the sole trusted source of any feedback. Additionally, Hana related this to the lack of expectation to engage with peer feedback from their teachers. However, Maha reported that she did not exclude the use of peer feedback if she considered her fellow student to excel in class. Thus, their attitudes to peer feedback could be seen as determined by their general lack of any experience. Furthermore, this current study found that the students’ general attitude aligned with that of their teachers, as discussed in Section [5.3.4.3](#).

The following section discusses the students' attitude towards oral feedback, as demonstrated in Table 5-10.

Table 5-10: Students' attitude towards oral feedback

Students		Students' Extracts (oral feedback)
Year:3	Jodi	"Yes, oral feedback is good, so I can ask my teacher about any error she indicates, or if I do not know how to correct it."
	Kloud	"I feel it would be important, because sometimes I do not wish to ask the teacher during the session. I mean that, yes, I can visit her office and ask her about my writing."
	Lina	"I do not know, but yes, I might ask for it".
Year:4	Maha	"Of course, I will ask the teacher; she is the one who knows about our errors and writing difficulties."
	Asma	"I do not know, we do not apply it individually, but it is fine if I ask the teacher about anything in my writing. She is nice".
	Hana	"The teacher corrects each error. I think this means there is no need for oral feedback, I just want it to be written down, so I can read it anytime."

This study found a mixture of responses regarding students' attitudes towards oral feedback, as shown in the table above. Jodi, Kloud and Maha were found to value oral feedback, although this was not the case when it came to Lina and Asma, while Hana reported that she felt she did not need such feedback. It is notable that these represent the students' attitudes expressed prior to being given any oral feedback on their written texts during the period of the study (i.e., the second semester) and it therefore may be that these attitudes relate to previous experiences of oral feedback during the first semester.

## 5.5.2 Students' Preferences Concerning Feedback Focus

This section examines the wishes of students in relation to those aspects of their writing they would prefer to be addressed by their teachers' feedback on their written text. Table 5-11 presents the evidence from the students' interviews, showing they are in agreement concerning those aspects they desired their teachers to focus on when giving feedback.

Table 5-11: Students' responses to the aspects on which they preferred their teachers to focus

Students		Students' Extracts
Year:3	Jodi	"I want to know my errors, especially when it comes to sentence order and grammatical errors. I feel that the teacher should correct them."
	Kloud	"The important thing is grammar, because I always make grammatical mistakes. Then vocabulary... grammar is a difficult aspect, the teacher should correct each error. I am unable to recognise my own grammatical errors."
	Lina	"Grammar and spelling, for sure."
Year:4	Maha	"Grammar, sentence order and vocabulary... I cannot correct them myself."
	Asma	"I know that I always write some sentences that are incorrect. I want my teacher to correct my sentences because it is always difficult to write a full sentence without any errors."
	Hana	"Every single error... especially grammar, as it is so hard; I want feedback on it."

The above demonstrates that all of the students wished their feedback to focus on language form, in particular grammar and spelling, with the majority also agreeing on the need to prioritise grammar. My observation from the interviews conducted with students was that they instantly and consistently identified the most problematic areas of writing competence to be grammatical issues, including spelling. As demonstrated in Table 5-11 , the students found it difficult to address their own grammatical errors, expecting that their teacher should undertake any corrections. These responses infer a concurrence, as discussed in Section 5.2.2.3, between the students and their teachers in relation to the need for feedback to focus on language form. In addition, the majority of students wished their teachers to correct these two aspects when giving feedback on their written texts, which also aligns with their preferences in terms of written feedback, as presented in Table 5-8 . This could be due to their concerns being focussed on these two aspects, or that their teacher tends to emphasise these in the classroom and/or during previous feedback. Such preferences could also be due to students' expectations of those aspects they feel teachers should provide in their feedback, as discussed below.

### 5.5.3 Types of Errors and Students' Expectations

As explained earlier, this theme explores students' expectations of the types of errors they consider should be covered by their teachers. This theme therefore offers an understanding of the types of errors on which students expect their teachers to focus when giving feedback. Table 5-12 below presents extracts from the first interviews with the students from both years on this theme.



Table 5-12: Students' expectations of teachers' feedback focus

Students		Students' Extracts (teacher's focus)
Year:3	Jodi	"She always focuses on grammar during the session and explains how to write a sentence. That is why she pays attention to spelling and grammar in my homework."
	Kloud	"She provides me with a direct correction of spelling and grammar."
	Lina	"Spelling and grammar are the main problems; she will correct them."
Year:4	Maha	"Spelling, grammar, and how to organise an essay."
	Asma	"The teacher always gives attention to spelling, prepositions, and punctuation marks."
	Hana	"Spelling, the format of the essay is important, as well as capitalisation."

These quotations from the interviews with the students from both years highlight that their expectations included that their teachers would focus on errors made at the level of language form. Additionally, the three students from Year Four also expected their teacher to provide feedback on these errors, as well as those relating to organisation and language mechanics, including capitalisation and punctuation. None of the students mentioned further aspects, such as content and meaning. This could be attributed to the following. First, the lack of clear instructions/handbook of the requirements students were able to consult when generating their written texts. This was clarified by the students' stated expectations of the feedback, which were mainly grounded in their assumption of their teacher's focus, but without being drawn from any formal guidelines.

Second, the teachers' own lack of focus on ideas and the content of the written product, as stated by both teachers in Section 5.3.2, which could indicate why students did not recognise the significance of content. Third, the reassessment of the students' final assessment. As discussed earlier, this included questions that were multiple-choice, true/false and gap-fill, as well as spelling tasks. These types of assessment are common in the current learning context of this study, and could therefore explain the students' preferences and requirements when it comes to their teachers' feedback.

In conclusion, this study found that students from Year Three and Year Four placed similar values on feedback. The most valued form was written feedback, while the least consisted of peer feedback, with a variation between their preferences for oral feedback. Additionally, the students wished their teachers to focus on language form, including mechanical errors. Nevertheless, students from both years agreed on surface-level expectations for their feedback, and none mentioned the importance of the development of ideas or the content of their written texts.

The above expectations consisted of those prior to the students receiving feedback on their homework. Their experience after receiving the feedback (including how this shaped their preferences and attitude) is addressed in the following section by Research Question Four: What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?

## **5.6 Students' Experiences of Teachers' Feedback**

As noted in the previous section, the interviews with the students examined their experiences of feedback from their teachers, with the analysis generating three major inductive themes: Firstly, the difficulties students encountered when dealing with the feedback, which covers the three difficulties students highlighted in their

interviews, i.e. a lack of understanding, misapprehension, and uncertainty. Secondly, the factors causing these difficulties, relating in particular to students' lack of engagement with the feedback and the absence of communication between students and teachers. Thirdly, students' responses to the feedback, divided into: (1) emotional, and (2) critical responses.

### 5.6.1 Difficulties of Dealing with The Feedback Provided

As noted above, this section presents the difficulties the students reported when dealing with their teachers' feedback. The sub-themes were developed from my interviews with students, guided by a standard question concerning how they viewed their feedback, for which I employed their corrected coursework as the stimulus. The students reported three difficulties, as shown in Figure 5-20 below.

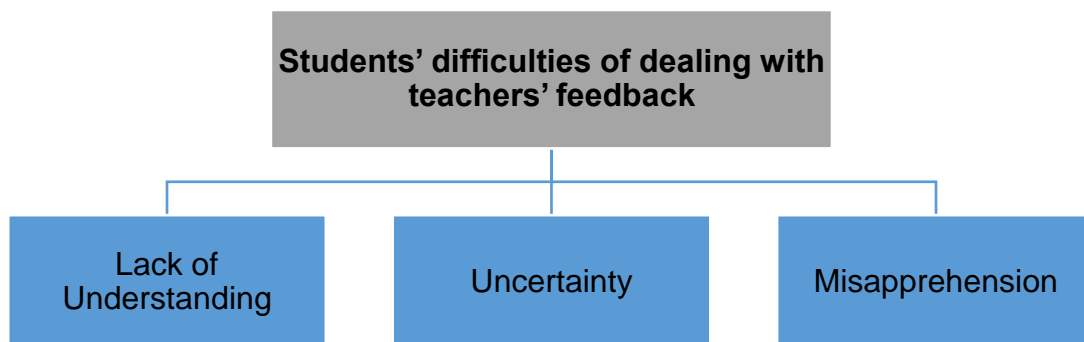


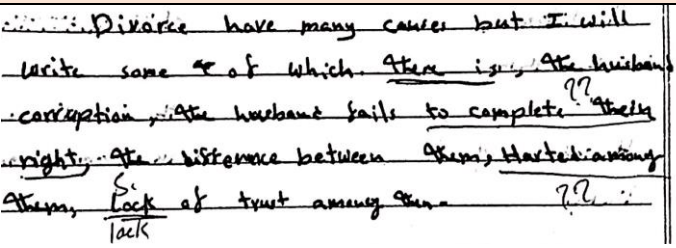
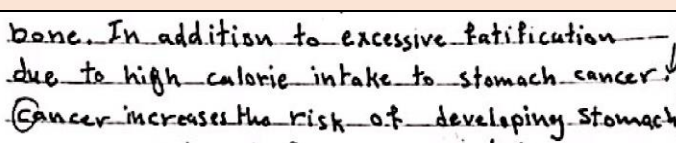
Figure 5-20: Types of students' difficulties

The following sub-themes present the evidence discussed in relation to the first theme in this section. Table 5-13, Table 5-14, Table 5-15 , and Table 5-16 display the students' statements concerning the difficulties they had encountered, alongside the relevant aspect of feedback, with each being illustrated by a concrete example from their coursework.

5.6.1.1 Lack of Understanding

The majority of students from both years reported that they failed to understand the indirect feedback provided by their teachers. Interviews with students from both years revealed that they experienced the greatest difficulty with indirect feedback, in particular: (1) question marks across their written text; (2) circling of errors; and (3) underlining. For example, Jodi stated that she found the question marks referring to several words unclear and that she did not understand their meaning. In addition, Kloud noted that she did not know what the teachers meant by circling a capitalisation error in her essay. Another type of indirect feedback resulting in difficulties for students, as reported by Lina and Maha, concerned an inability to understand underlining of their text, as represented in the tables below.

Table 5-13: Difficulties explored with Year Three

Years	Difficulties identified from interviews	Evidence taken from students' texts
Year 3: Feedback Given by Teacher Sara	<b>Jodi</b>	
	"I asked the teacher about the question marks because they were not clear."	
	<b>Kloud</b>	
	"I did not know what to do."	
<b>Lina</b>		

	<p>"I don't know what the error is here." (underlining)</p>	
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Table 5-14: Difficulties explored with Year Four

Years	Difficulties identified from interviews	Evidence taken from students' texts
<b>Year 4:</b> <b>Feedback Given by Noor</b>	Maha	
	<p>"I don't understand what my errors are."</p>	

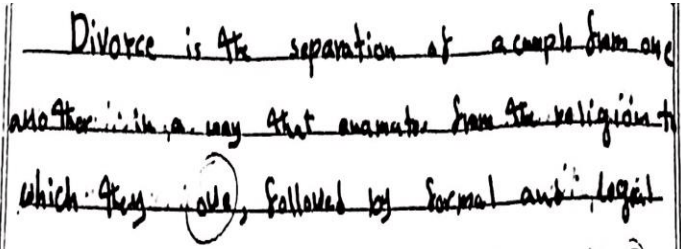
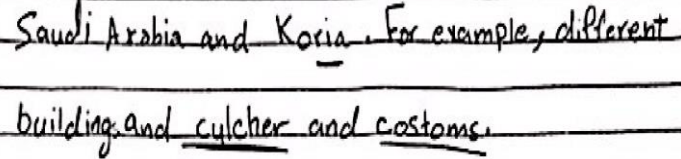
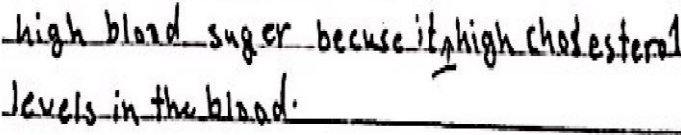
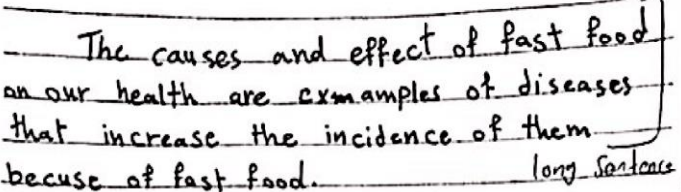
This shared pattern in reported difficulties goes beyond the students' levels, confirming that both experienced difficulties in understanding indirect feedback. However, none of the students reported difficulties in understanding metalinguistic feedback related to codes, i.e. 'S' indicating spelling errors and 'G' indicating grammar errors.

This is most likely due to having been given a clear explanation of these error codes by their teachers. Therefore, the lack of understanding is related to some types of indirect feedback, (i.e. circling, underlining and question marks) that do not clearly identify the nature of the error being highlighted.

5.6.1.2 Uncertainty

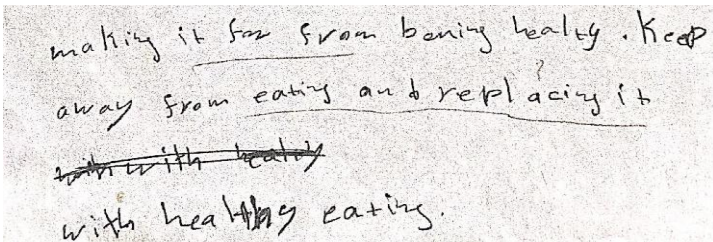
The interviews with students revealed that they also experienced uncertainty as to the meaning of the feedback, with some left to guess the relevance of some symbols (i.e. circles, underlines, and arrows).

Table 5-15: Uncertainty of understanding feedback in Year Three

Years	Difficulties identified from interviews	Evidence taken from students' texts
Year 3: Feedback Given by Teacher Sara	<b>Jodi</b>	
	"I am not sure what this means (circle). Maybe it requires me to correct the spelling or remove the word?"	
	<b>Kloud</b>	
	"...maybe this is a spelling error?"	
	"I think there is a missing word."	
"...maybe she requires me to write more sentences?"		

For example, Jodi believed that the error circled in her text required her to either “correct the spelling” or “remove the word”. Kloud reported a similar issue with the use of underlining and arrows to indicate her errors, guessing that the former indicated spelling errors while the latter was used to address missing words. Moreover, Asma reported a number of identical issues, as she had to guess the meaning of the underlining in her feedback.

Table 5-16: Uncertainty of understanding feedback in Year Four

Years	Difficulties identified from interviews	Evidence taken from students' texts
Year 4: Feedback Given by Noor	Asma	
	"Maybe structure order?"	 <p>making it far from being healthy. Keep away from eating and replacing it with healthy eating.</p>

In addition to the uncertainty relating to indirect feedback, Kloud from Year Three also stated being unclear about the meaning of commentary feedback, in particular the written commentary (i.e. ‘long sentence’) provided by her teacher. The students indicated that they did not understand all of the written comments.

This could have arisen as a result of the way they were presented by the teachers, or could be attributed to the impact of the practice of only requiring a single draft. The factors contributing to the creation of these difficulties is discussed in detail

in the second theme concerning students' experience of their teachers' feedback. The following section examines an additional difficulty in understanding, as observed in my interviews with the students.

#### 5.6.1.3 Misapprehension

This subtheme mainly refers to a misunderstanding by Lina, in relation to the written commentary provided her teacher (i.e. Sara). As shown in Figure 5-21 , Lina failed to understand the point made in the comment provided as feedback, as shown in her comment questioning the meaning of this type of feedback: "I thought the teacher was asking for another piece of coursework ...I don't understand the comment". Lina eventually rewrote her comparative essay on another topic, rather than working with the feedback to improve the same coursework, as shown in Figure 5-22 . Lina's misapprehension of her teacher's feedback shows that students can sometimes misread clearly written feedback in this particular context. A discussion of this particular point can be found in the discussion chapter.



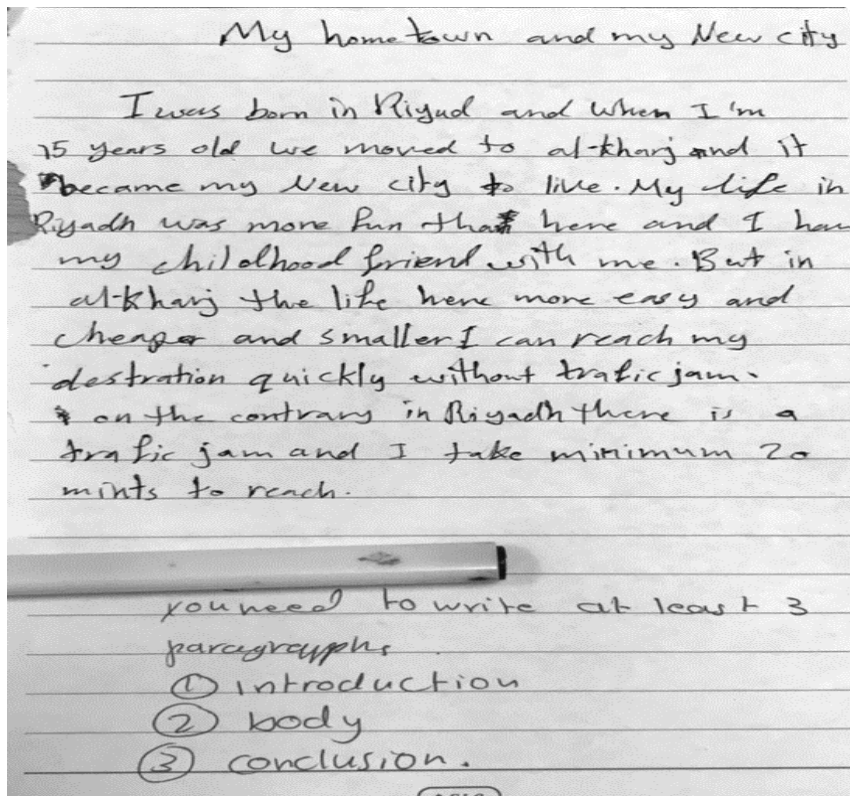


Figure 5-21: Lina's first draft

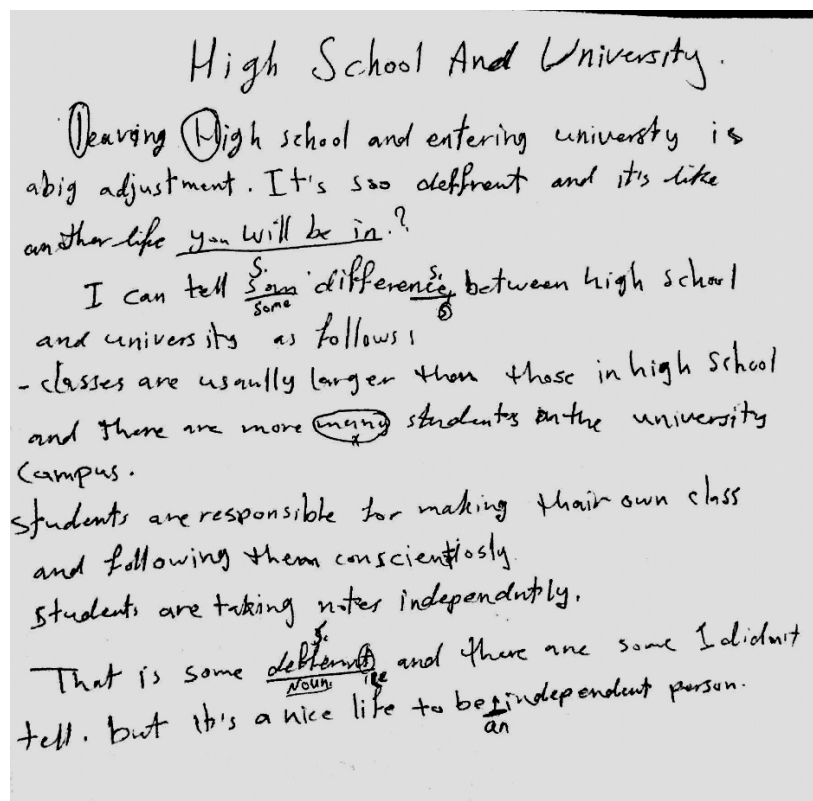


Figure 5-22: Lina's second draft

## 5.6.2 Lack of Communication and Neglecting Student-Teacher Dialogue

As reported above, it was found that students experienced difficulties dealing with teachers' feedback. Although it can be said that such difficulties may have been emerged due to the lack of feedback clarity, my analysis of students' interviews, along with the feedback provided by their teachers on their written coursework, identified two salient factors contributing to these difficulties regardless of the feedback clarity. These two factors were inductively developed throughout the analysis. First, due to the lack of multiple drafts in this context, students are found to lack the engagement in the process of feedback leading them to experience difficulties. Second, students are found to neglect to inquire for further clarifications although they may have not fully understood the given feedback and teachers offer them the opportunity as reported in Section 5.4.3.2.

### 5.6.2.1 Lack Of Engagement in Feedback Process

During this study, I observed the students' lack of engagement when responding to feedback on their written coursework. Furthermore, both Maha and Kloud reported that they made no attempts to ask their teachers for clarification when they experienced difficulties. This is clearly due to the fact that there is no redrafting required, and the system of awarding marks without the students revising their texts. Both students claimed that there was no need to ask as long as scores would not change (i.e., Maha stated "Since I got full marks", and Kloud stated "because it does not improve the score"), as detailed below.

First, I examine Maha's response to the feedback provided in Figure 5-23 below, as discussed during her interview.

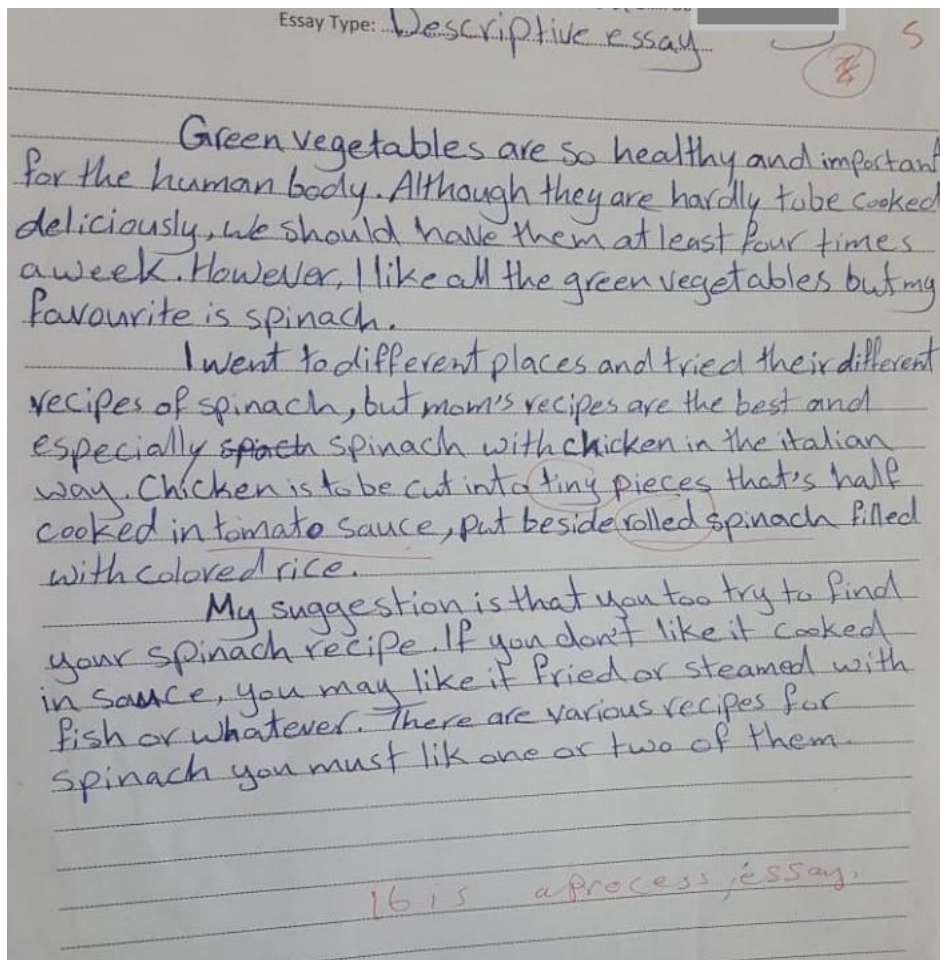


Figure 5-23: Maha's descriptive essay

**Maha:** I know what a process essay is, I did one last semester, but I do not know what my error is...my essay is descriptive, as required.

**Sahar:** Have you asked your teacher about what the requirement was, or what she meant by this, maybe?

**Maha:** Since I got full marks, why do I need to ask?

The above dialogue represents two main points. First, it reveals Maha's lack of engagement with her teacher, even when she clearly faced difficulties in understanding the purpose of the comment provided. However, the second point is

represented by the final line of the dialogue, which refers to her feeling that she has no need to make any unnecessary effort, when she has already achieved full marks for her coursework.

My understanding of the feedback in Figure 5-23: Maha's descriptive essay the teacher is trying to notify Maha that the essay genre is not descriptive as required, and the teacher assessed Maha on her language accuracy only, thus she got a full mark. Maha, on the other hand, seems to lack understanding of the difference between the descriptive and process essay and only paid attention to the score she received.

Second, Kloud also demonstrated a lack of engagement when attempting to resolve the difficulties she faced in understanding her teacher's feedback. As reported in Table 5-15, Kloud tended to guess the meaning, but neither chose to communicate with her teacher nor engage with the feedback, as follows:

**Sahar:** How do you handle the feedback?

**Kloud:** I don't do anything. I just receive my coursework and keep it to study before the exam.

**Sahar:** Did you ask your teacher about the feedback at all?

**Kloud:** No, I didn't.

The first part of the dialogue shows that Kloud was one of those students who kept the teachers' feedback as a resource when preparing for the examination. However, despite her uncertainty about the meaning of the feedback, she did not ask her teacher to clarify this uncertainty. Kloud's lack of engagement is in line with her attitude towards the value of the feedback, in particular her comment: "I think there is no need for feedback, because it does not improve the score". This attitude could be attributed to the product-based practice of teaching writing (i.e. single draft), which

places a higher value on the mark given to the students' coursework than the feedback itself.

#### 5.6.2.2 Neglecting Student-Teacher Dialogue

The second factor emerging through the analysis of my interviews with the students refers to their failure to initiate a dialogue with their teachers in order to address the difficulties they encountered when receiving feedback. The majority of students tended to lack an understanding of the importance of communication with their teachers to resolve their concerns. When prompted about their ways of handling problematic feedback, they answered as represented in the following excerpt:

**Sahar:** How do you handle feedback you found difficult to understand?

**Lina:** I try to understand the teacher's comment and translate it by means of Google.

**Jodi:** I just read it and look at errors I have made.

**Hana:** I look at the scores and see what errors I have made.

**Asma:** I look at the correction and the score. Then, if I do not understand why I got less than 5, I asked my teacher to explain.

**Maha:** I use a dictionary app to correct my spelling and write the words I got wrong in a list, so I can use it when studying for the exam.

It is significant that none of these students considered any need to engage in a dialogue with their teachers concerning the difficulties they faced concerning their feedback. However, the students differed in their methods of replacing such a dialogue, i.e., Lina and Maha both consulted technological resources. In addition, they tended to focus primarily on their score, with Asma noting that she asked her teacher to explain the score but not her feedback. This concurs with the view expressed by both teachers that their students' only interest was with scores, as examined in Section

5.4.3.2. This indicates that the lack of mediation by teachers following feedback tends to limit the students' opportunity to improve their written work and maximise their understanding of their teachers' feedback.

Thus, the two most significant factors identified throughout the interviews with students are: firstly, their lack of engagement with feedback on their work, and secondly, their reluctance to engage in dialogue with their teacher to benefit from the written feedback. In addition, the students clearly stated that the type of feedback used by teachers (in particular indirect feedback and written commentary) contributed to their difficulties. Although it can be claimed that some feedback provided (e.g. shown in [Table 5-13](#) and [Table 5-14](#) ) was not understood, students were not required to redraft and did not benefit from the opportunity of individual conferences that their teachers offered. Students could have asked for clarifications leading these difficulties to be mitigated. The next section discusses students' responses to the feedback they received from their teachers.

### 5.6.3 Students' Responses to Feedback

This theme examines the students' views of their teachers' feedback, as expressed in the interviews. This feedback is classified into two main categories of response in [Figure 5-24](#): first, the students' emotional response to their teacher's feedback and second, the students' critical responses to feedback, including the different types of feedback provided on their written texts. These are discussed in further depth in the following two sections.

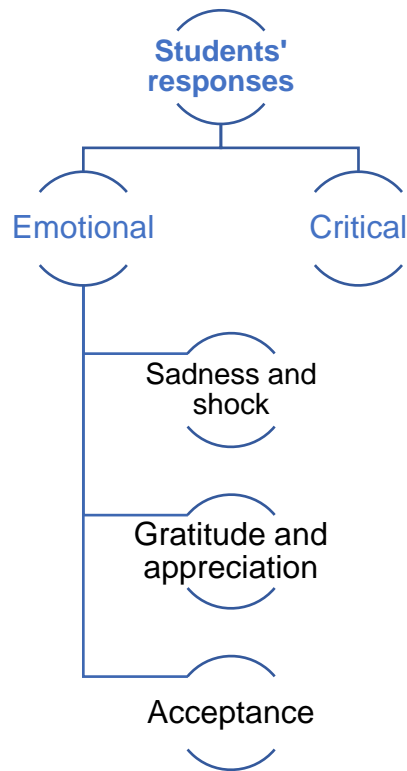


Figure 5-24: Types of student responses to feedback

### 5.6.3.1 Emotional Response

As noted above, the students' emotional response to their teachers' feedback was an overarching sub-theme for both cases. One response consisted of sadness and shock, as expressed by Jodi:

I was really sad, because when I read the feedback, I thought my level in writing was really low. This was because the teacher underlined the same spelling errors throughout the paragraphs, so I was shocked when I saw the paper before analysing the feedback. But I eventually understood that it was just one error being picked up again and again. (Jodi, Interview)

This indicates Jodi's awareness of her emotions upon receiving the feedback, including being reassured once she understood she was seeing the same error being repeatedly underlined (i.e. the words "flowrs" and "flowr"), as demonstrated in Figure 5-25 below.



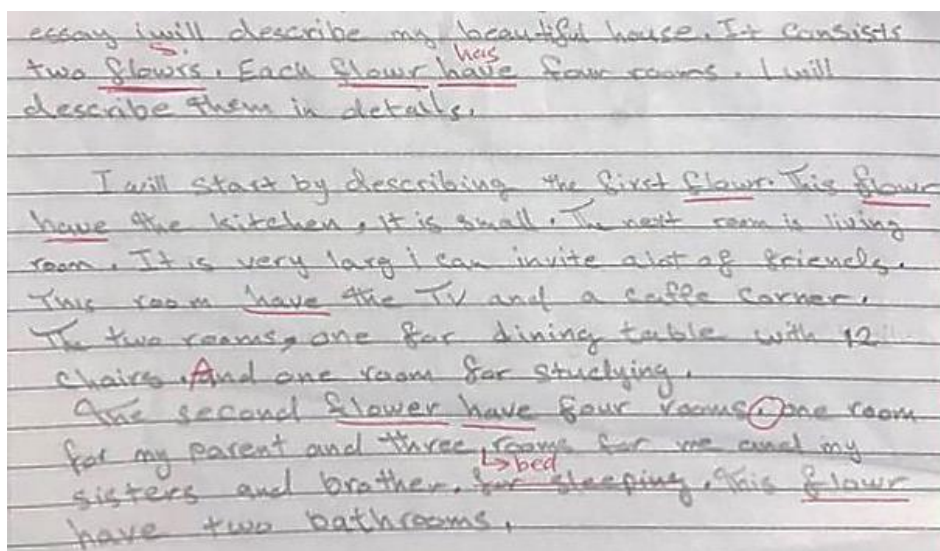


Figure 5-25: Teacher indirect feedback affected Jodi emotionally

In addition, the practise of feedback shown above indicates that the practice of underlining the same error across the whole coursework could, for some students, generate negative emotions. However, a number of students, including Jodi, appreciated such feedback in certain situations. For example, in the conversation discussed above, Jodi expressed gratitude and appreciation towards written commentary that clearly informed her of the steps she should take to improve her writing, as represented in Figure 5-26.

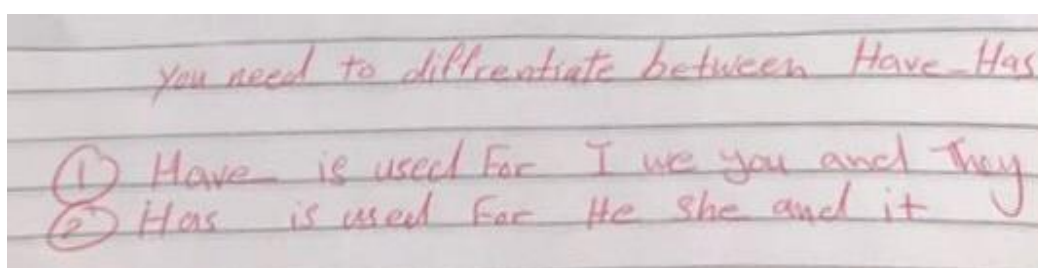


Figure 5-26: A comment Jodi found beneficial

Commenting on this feedback, Jodi observed: "this comment was really helpful, I understood it well, because she explained to me the uses of 'has' and 'have' in the sentence, which I documented in my notes".



Asma also expressed appreciation for the written commentary shown in Figure 5-27 below, stating:

This comment is easy to understand. I've always found written commentaries clear. I would like to receive this for each piece of coursework, as I can translate it and understand it. The comments are very helpful... error codes are also helpful for minor errors, such as spelling, as I can easily search for the correction ... I always pay attention to each correction. (Asma, Interview).

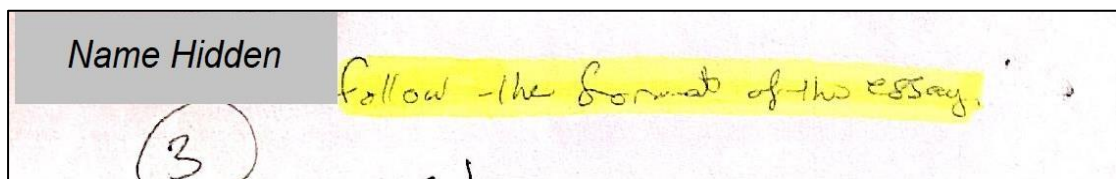


Figure 5-27: A comment given to Asma

The above demonstrates the student's gratitude for this type of feedback as well as her attempts to improve her writing.

Additionally, the remainder of the students reported being satisfied to see red ink on their coursework as a form of feedback, as noted by Kloud and Lina:

It's okay with me, and I never ignore any feedback, I have to read every bit. Because I trust my teacher's comments, I do not even discuss it with her, because I know she is the one who has the expertise to comment on my essay. In addition, she explains quite a bit about our errors in the classroom, and, frankly, we have learned a lot from her feedback in the class, which I feel has improved my writing. (Kloud, Interview)

Of course, I would like to receive feedback from my teacher, and I read it even if it means that I have many errors, but it is for me to know my errors and not repeat them again...I read all the comments given, even if they are long, because I need to improve my English and learn from my teacher ... I feel happy when I see many comments, because I can refer to them later when I am studying for the exams ... I am a learner; I expect feedback. (Lina, Interview)

In addition to the acceptance of written feedback on their coursework, some students (particularly those from Year Four) expressed an appreciation of their teacher's immediate oral feedback in the classroom as they were developing their written texts, as demonstrated by Hana and Maha:

The feedback she gives in the classroom is really important and I try to record it as she explains. Sometimes during the lesson, I show her a sentence I have written to ask for her feedback, and she corrects it for me. I mean, I understand it when she explains it to me. (Hana, Interview)

The best thing the teacher does is when she goes around the classroom while we write, and points to our correct writing and our errors. I mean, she helps us in the development of our texts before we submit them. That is why she does not provide me with much written feedback. (Maha, Interview)

The above comments demonstrate the students' gratitude towards their teacher's feedback during the lesson, particularly in relation to grammar and organisation of their written coursework. In addition, the interviews with the students revealed the teaching of writing during lessons appeared to follow the stages of the process approach, including teachers reviewing their writing.

In addition to these emotional responses, there was also a consistently critical response from students to the different types of teachers' feedback in relation to their written texts, as discussed below.

#### 5.6.3.2 Critical Response

As previously discussed, Jodi demonstrated an awareness of her emotions upon receiving her feedback, manifested through the response she expressed after the simultaneous experience of negative emotions and being appreciative. This response formed a critique of her teacher's feedback, as well as an indication of how

she felt it should be, as demonstrated in response to the repeated underlining of errors and to the corrections shown in Figure 5-28 below.

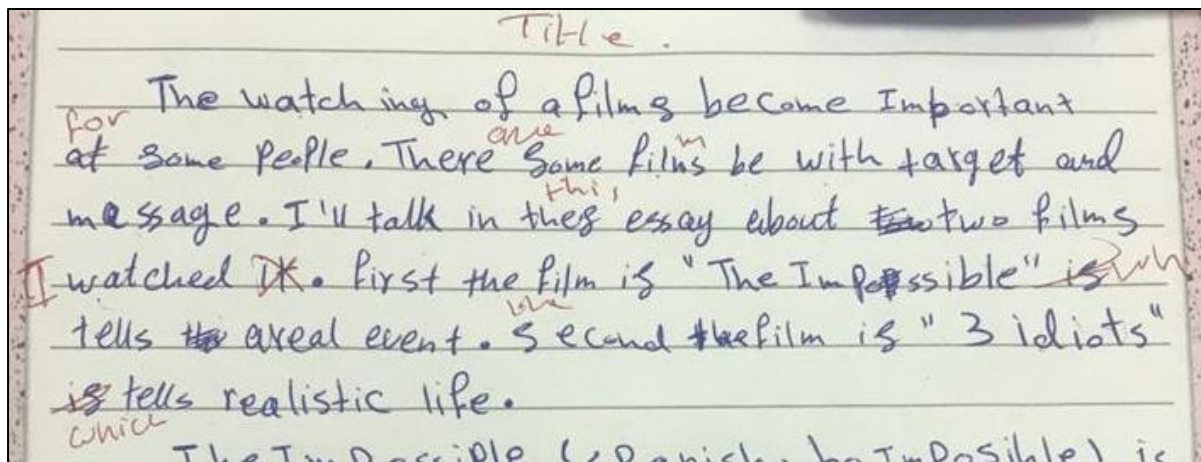


Figure 5-28: Comments criticised by Jodi

Jodi said:

Feedback should only be provided when there are major errors, such as at the level of syntax, rather than just spelling or word choice [pointing at the word 'film' line two]. For example, [pointing at the cross (X) symbol used to cross out the pronoun *it*], this is a minor error, and it should not be marked like this. I don't understand why it is crossed out in the first place. I feel the teacher should provide written comments for major errors only. (Jodi, Interview)

Another critical response was that of Kloud to the feedback shown in Figure 5-29 below.

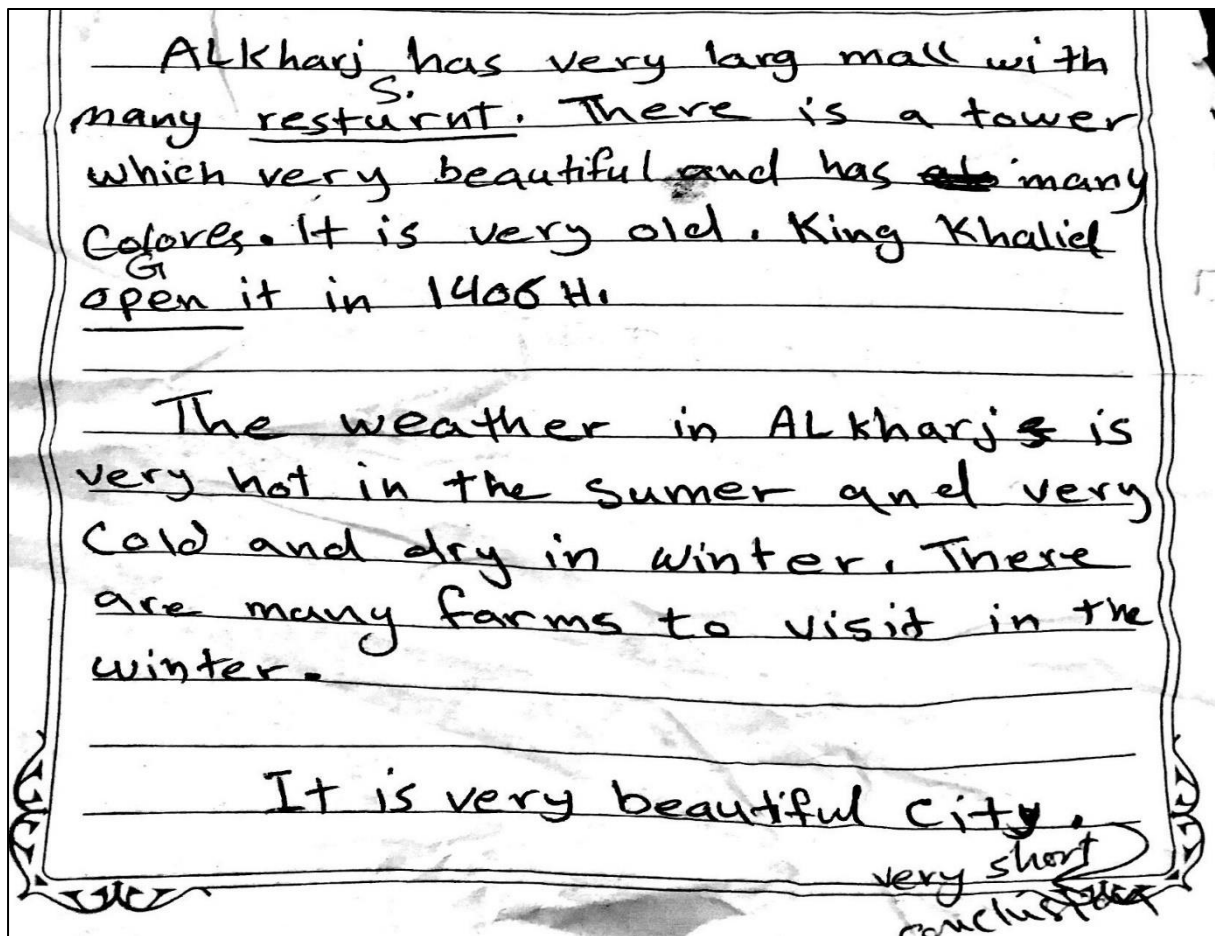


Figure 5-29: Comments criticised by Kloud

Kloud stated:

The feedback is supposed to be detailed, not just providing general comments like this [pointing at the comment in Figure 5-29]. For example, the teachers could explain why this is t an error and provide a correction...if there is not a detailed comment to explain the correction, I would rather have direct corrective feedback, or she should explain it in the classroom...the error codes are so important, and at least I understand the nature of the error better than when she uses underlining and circling, which I feel are useless. (Kloud, Interview)



This shows that, although Kloud possessed a literal understanding of its meaning, she still criticised the brief comment provided by the teacher and suggested the kinds of feedback she would have found more effective.

Furthermore, Hana criticised the feedback provided by Noor, the Year Four teacher:

[Pointing at the feedback represented in Figure 5-30] I feel that her feedback is so simple, it is not beneficial. I do not want to explore my errors, as she has shown me here. She is supposed to provide direct corrections, so I can see my errors and her corrections (Hana, Interview).

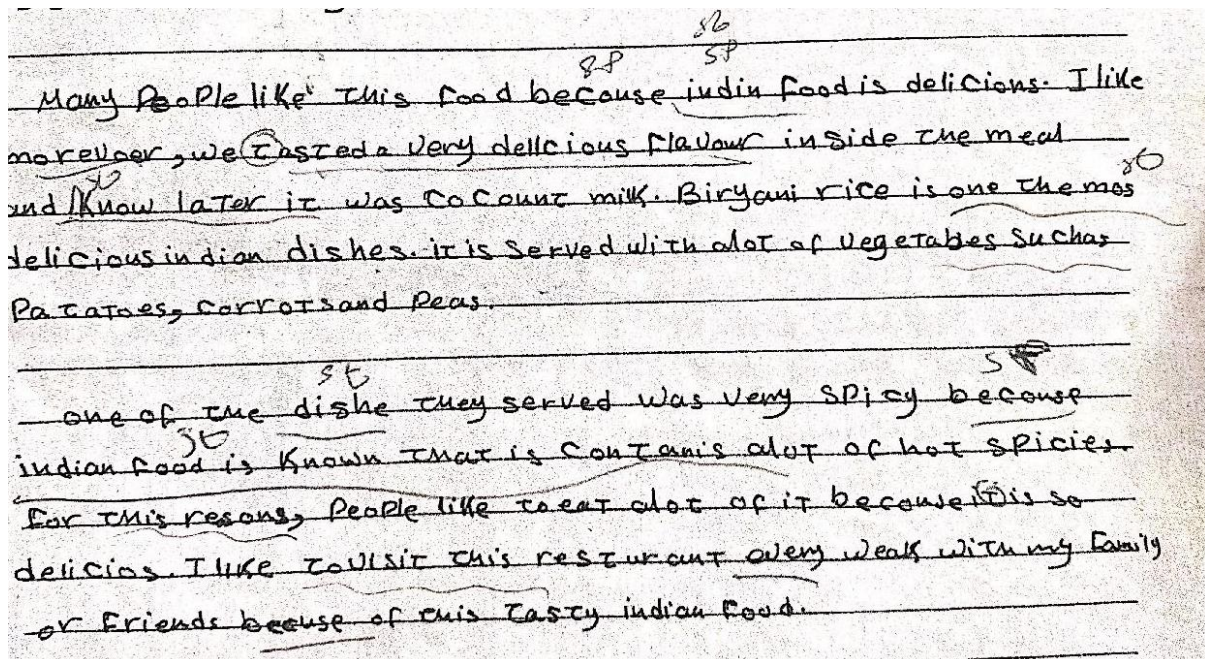


Figure 5-30: Example of Noor's feedback on Hana's coursework

In a similar vein, and following an appreciative response to her teacher's feedback, Hana provided this criticism on another type of feedback "...I know what 'ST' means, but no need for it without the correction of the sentence".

Moreover, in her interview, Lina also demonstrated a critical response towards the oral feedback provided by the teacher, as shown in Figure 5-31, acknowledging her lack of understanding of written comments and criticising her teacher's response. Recalling her conversation with the teacher in her office, Lina highlighted the importance of oral follow up to explain the teacher's written comments but claimed that it should be done in a language the student understands. In her case, she raised the significance of using her first language to maximise her understanding of her teacher's feedback>

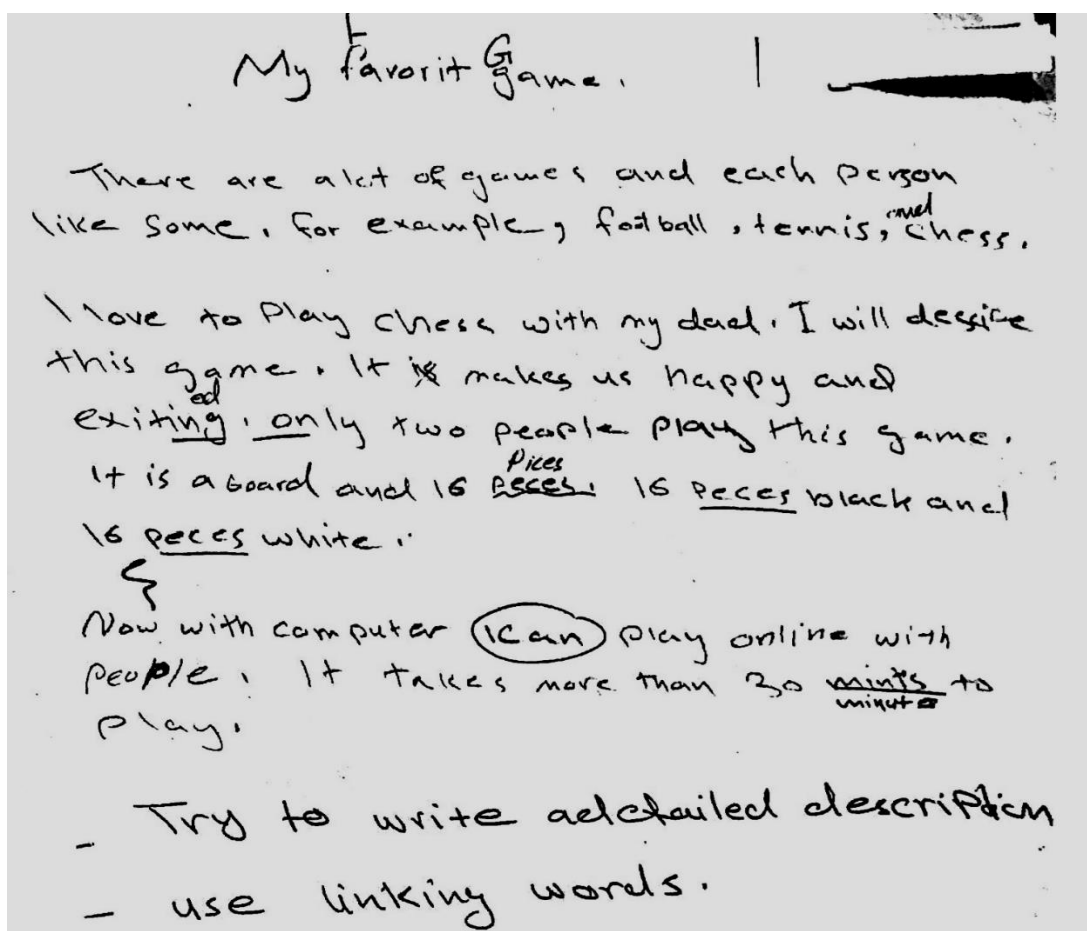


Figure 5-31: Sara's feedback for Lina which led to a request for oral feedback

I do not like the comments provided by the teacher, as I do not understand what is required. I wish she explained them to me, because when I asked her about this one [pointing at the first comment in the feedback shown in Figure 5-31], she replied to me in English saying that I sounded as if I was talking to objects,

and it was not clear. I did not understand her answer, so, I kept at it and asked her again. It was only then that she answered me in Arabic, saying that my ideas were not clear. So, it is important to me that the oral explanation is given in Arabic, to enable me to understand and benefit from the feedback. (Lina, Interview).

The following section concludes the findings presented in this chapter.

## 5.7 Summary

This section summarises the major findings relating to the research questions reported in this chapter.

Research Question One: What is the process of giving feedback to EFL bachelor students at Prince University?

The findings to this question identified two themes: (1) the teachers' practice of teaching writing and (2) how teachers provide feedback.

The first theme focused on the teachers' practice of teaching writing. The second theme focused on the teachers' methods of providing feedback and generated three sub-themes: (1) the overall strategy used when responding to students' text; (2) the types of feedback employed, and (3) feedback focus. This study found that, even when it was not a requirement of their department, the teachers tended to give feedback, using four different forms (i.e. commentary, direct, indirect, and metalinguistic) in response to the types of errors they identified in the students' coursework. The study found that the teachers offered oral feedback to the entire class, but only if the students asked for further clarification, or if there were recurring errors. The teachers were found to prefer providing written feedback on students' coursework, due to considering that feedback should focus primarily on language form and essay organisation, followed by content.

Research Question Two: What is the understanding of feedback held by teachers of writing and their beliefs concerning the giving of feedback in relation to their students' written coursework?

The findings in response to the second research question investigated the teachers' preferences when giving feedback on students' written coursework in this EFL university context. The analysis of teachers' interviews identified the following themes: (1) that the responsibility for feedback provision rested exclusively with the teacher; (2) the focus of feedback; and (3) the importance of marking students' texts to encourage them to pay attention to the feedback and feedback preferences.

First, both teachers believed it was their personal responsibility to give feedback, as this improved their students' writing competence as well as helping them when preparing for examinations. The teachers also believed that highlighting students' errors helped demonstrate the reasons for their scores. The teachers also agreed that giving scores to students was a way of maximising their engagement, as both teachers assumed that their students did not read the feedback.

Second, the study found the teachers focused primarily on language form, organisation and genre, so being generally aligned with the students' own expectations. The large number of students in each class, and the considerable amount of coursework they were required to mark, led the teachers to prefer using group discussion to explain any recurring errors and provide indirect feedback. Another common preference was for one-to-one oral feedback, along with direct and detailed feedback commentary.

Third, the chapter reported on the factors impacting teachers in the process of giving feedback. These consisted of: (1) contextual factors; (2) types of students' writing errors; and (3) teachers' attitudes towards students.



First, the contextual factors consisted of the large number of pupils in each class, along with time constraints, and a lack of department policies, guidelines and assessment models. Second, the types of errors made by students in their coursework tended to impact on the types and focus of the teachers' feedback. Third, teachers' attitudes towards their students' competence, as well as their perceptions of students' response to feedback, were also found to influence teachers' practices of giving feedback. This study highlighted several factors from the datasets, showing both matches and mismatches between teachers' beliefs and their feedback practices. These factors, along with their impact on the students' ability to understand feedback, are discussed in the following chapter.

Research Question Three: What are the EFL students' expectations of their teachers' feedback?

The findings concerning the third research question exploring students' initial expectations of their teachers' feedback identified three themes: (1) the preferences and attitudes towards different feedback types; (2) students' preferences of feedback focus; and (3) types of errors and students' expectations.

First, the students were found to share a preference for written feedback, in particular direct corrective feedback. The research identified a variety of responses to oral feedback, with some students expressing a preference, while others did not consider that it served any purpose. The least favoured form was found to be peer feedback, for which none of the students expressed a preference for this. Second, students shared their preferences when it came to the focus of feedback, stating that they preferred this to concentrate on language form. This could be due to language form being the most important aspect they needed to improve, or due to their beliefs that such feedback would ensure they were fully prepared for examinations, which

include the understanding of language form. Third, while they preferred to be given feedback on language form, they also expected comments on their organisation. This study concluded that such expectations may have arisen due to their previous experience of feedback.

Research Question Four: What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?

The findings to the fourth research question explored students' experiences of teachers' feedback in relation to the following themes: (1) difficulties of dealing with feedback, (2) a lack of communication and neglecting student-teacher dialogue and (3) students' responses to the feedback. The first theme concerning difficulties of dealing with feedback found that the students faced three major difficulties when handling feedback: (1) a lack of understanding, (2) uncertainty, and (3) misapprehension. The second theme concerning a lack of communication explored two main factors identified as contributing to these difficulties, i.e. students' lack of engagement with feedback and an absence of student-teacher dialogue. The final theme, focusing on students' responses to feedback, examined students' emotional and critical responses to their teachers' feedback.

This demonstrates that the findings were generated and developed in a manner to facilitate a fuller understanding of the process of giving feedback by means of a case study of a recently established Saudi university EFL context. The following chapter discusses these findings in relation to the relevant empirical literature and ESL theories concerning the use of feedback.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the key research findings of this study, with reference to the existing literature and studies in the different contexts, particularly the Saudi context. The chapter is divided into three sections; the first section 6.2 discusses the main findings concerning findings of research questions one and two, regarding the views and practices of the feedback process of EFL teachers at Prince University in Saudi Arabia. The second section 6.3 concerns the main findings related to the third research question, namely students' expectations including their perception of feedback on their writing. The third section 6.4 discusses the findings of the fourth research question that concerns the challenges students experience when dealing with feedback, and their responses to it. The chapter concludes by highlighting the main points, in order that their implications and the associated recommendations can be made in the next chapter.

### 6.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Regarding Feedback Provision in the EFL Context of a Recently Established Saudi University

This section presents five key themes arising from the exploration of the first two research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) regarding teachers' beliefs and practices, each of which is discussed separately presenting a variety of factors that are observed to affect teachers' process of feedback provision. These five themes concern teachers' responsibility for feedback provision, teachers' reliance on written feedback on the final product, teachers' conflicting views on direct and indirect feedback, teachers' focus when providing feedback, and teachers' strategies when responding to students' written coursework.

### 6.2.1 Responsibility for Feedback Provision Rests with Teachers

An interesting key finding of the current study was the belief among the teachers concerning the process of feedback provision that it is entirely their responsibility. This belief was manifest in their practice and understanding of the process of feedback provision. Moreover, teachers did not consider peer feedback to be a valuable resource in the process of teaching writing, and it was not applied in the context concerned. This view of feedback as solely a teacher's responsibility produced an authoritative feedback provision practice, as evidenced in Section 5.3.4.3. The findings revealed that there was an alignment between the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding where the authority to provide feedback lay. From a ZPD perspective, this finding indicates that teachers as experts believed that they helped their students through the use of written feedback as a scaffolding learning tool by creating an opportunity for students to develop their knowledge and support them to move from other regulation to self-regulation (Mustafa, 2012). For the self-regulation to be achieved, the role of teachers must first be to provide a sufficient amount of support to complete the task and then decrease the amount of scaffolding progressively until students become capable of completing the task independently (Elicker, 1995). Thus, teachers are responsible for introducing social interaction opportunities with 'more capable peers' through a peer feedback model (Mustafa, 2012). In this current study, as clearly observed from the findings, there is a lack of interaction between students and teachers and between peers during the writing and feedback process.

There are several contextual factors that were explored across the analysis of the datasets generated for this study. First, teachers' and students' attitudes towards feedback source, as explored in Sections 5.4.3 and 5.5.1. On one hand, students

believe that feedback is teachers' responsibility and can only be done by teachers. More importantly, they have no confidence in their peers to provide feedback (Section 5.5.1), as they only trust teachers' knowledge and ability. This is in line with previous studies' findings on different EFL contexts such as Hamouda (2011); Mahfoodh (2011) and Srichanyachon (2012), as discussed in Chapter 3. On the other hand, even teachers believe feedback is their responsibility, but also believe that students are unable to provide each other with feedback, therefore they are the only source of feedback. This is also reported in various studies such as Shulin (2013) and Ferris (2014) who conducted their studies on EFL and ESL teachers, respectively. Clearly, this seems to be a common issue among various contexts, but I believe in the current study context it can be highlighted due to the fact that teachers and students do not engage with each other sufficiently during the writing sessions.

A second contextual factor is the absence of both feedback policy and guidelines, and professional training in providing feedback, as explored in Section 5.4.1.2. As reported in Chapter 5, these two elements were responsible for the teachers' belief that it was their responsibility to develop their own feedback guidelines and may have shaped their non-standard approach to the practice of feedback provision. Moreover, the findings also demonstrated that teachers accessed informal support resources, such as consulting their male colleagues at the university (Section 5.2.1.3), as explored in the case of the participant Noor, and seeking the support of the head of the department only when needed. Evidently, in this context in which the teachers were held accountable for achieving the learning outcomes set by the department, and in the absence of guidelines and professional training to support them in the process of providing feedback, this is seen to shape their beliefs and practices concerning where the authority to provide feedback lay. However, according to

Alshahrani and Storch (2014), who conducted their study in a similar context (i.e., a Saudi university EFL context), the provision of feedback institutional guidelines may prevent teachers from teaching in a way that aligns their beliefs. Teachers were required to strictly follow the university's feedback policy that dictated the provision of indirect feedback using error codes. This was criticised by teachers as they believe that feedback should vary depending upon students' language proficiency. Another study conducted by Lee (2008) where institutional guidelines were provided showed that a lack of training on feedback guidelines is a factor that influenced teachers' practice. In other words, from these two studies, it can be observed that although institutional guidelines of the provision on feedback were provided, teachers wished to have some freedom of choice when providing feedback, and training on feedback practise is needed as Lee claimed. Giving the findings reported in this current study, teachers lack both training and guidance, which made feedback non-standard in the case of both teachers (i.e., Noor and Sara). Therefore, I believe that it is hard to determine whether teachers in this context should be provided with institutional guidelines to be followed or not. However, I strongly argue that sufficient training is important in any teaching writing context, particularly this context, as once provided, despite the presence or absence of guidelines, teachers can develop or adapt the most suitable model of feedback for the context and their students. In other words, the provision of appropriate professional training regardless of the provision of consistent institutional guidelines, I believe, can contribute to not only standardising the practice of feedback provision, but also empower teachers to embrace the use of other forms of feedback, such as peer feedback, thereby bridging the gap between themselves and their students.

## 6.2.2 Written Feedback Is Provided on the Final Product

The analysis of the different datasets indicated the teachers' reliance on the use of written feedback over other feedback types on the final product. A possible explanation for the preferred use of this practice is due to the writing teaching model followed by the teachers as illustrated in Section 5.2.1.1.

From the findings, it was found that there are a number of factors that have contributed to the shaping of this approach to feedback provision in this context. First, the large number of students in the writing classroom in this context (i.e., 35 in year three and 52 in year four) and the limited amount of time that teachers had for teaching, marking and supporting students was reported to be an influential factor. These constraints teachers' practice of providing feedback only on the final outcome of the students' writing, and not requiring multiple drafts. These two factors seem clearly interrelated and have been reported in various studies that were conducted on different contexts concerning feedback practices, such as Lee (2009), Ferris et al. (2011b), Ferris (2014), and Junqueira and Payant (2015), as detailed in Section 3.6.2. For example, Lee (2009) conducted a study on an EFL context and found that the factor that prevented teachers from employing the multiple draft approach was because teachers lacked sufficient time, as they needed to cover additional writing topics to prepare their students for the examination. Therefore, as observed from previous studies and the current study, teachers opt to use written feedback and evaluate only the final product of their students' written texts because of the limited time they are able to devote to the large number of students in their classrooms.

Second, teachers' background is seen to influence their decision to provide feedback only on the final product. As presented in Section 4.3.2, both teachers participating in this current study were EFL teachers who originally trained as linguists,

and qualified in English Literature and Applied Linguistics. Therefore, they are not specialised in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL).

This binding ties in with the observation of Ferris (2003a) that “many L2 writing teachers (trained by linguists rather than rhetoric/composition experts) were responding to single-draft student products as language practice rather than written expression” (p.22). In terms of the teachers in the current study, they seem to lack the pedagogical knowledge of how to teach writing, and how to respond to students’ written texts as multiple drafts. However, it should be noted that the influence of teachers’ background on their practice of teaching writing and giving feedback was not explored directly during the data generation phase in this study. Hence, further research might be needed to explore teachers’ perspectives concerning how their training background shaped their practice of responding to students’ writing. I believe if teachers were well trained to respond to multiple drafts, the issue of responding only to the final product could be addressed. However, besides teachers being trained as linguists, it is also found that they lack professional training on giving feedback, as already discussed on Section 5.4.1.2, and reported as a factor affecting their beliefs.

### 6.2.3 Conflicting Views on Direct or Indirect Feedback

Findings of the current study illustrated the contradictory nature of the teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding direct and indirect feedback. First, the vast majority of feedback provided on the written coursework from both teachers was indirect compared to the direct feedback, and the analysis of the teachers’ interviews demonstrated the existence of different attitudes towards the use of direct and indirect feedback. For example, Sara believed that direct feedback was preferable, but she also employed indirect feedback, justifying this by explaining that it saved her time and was sometimes more appropriate for the nature of the error type. Meanwhile, Noor



held a similar belief, explaining in her interview that “direct or indirect feedback is not enough”, and that the feedback she provided on her students’ writing was mostly in the form of indirect feedback and error codes, a practice that she explained she employed “to justify their scores” (see Section 5.3.4.2). As Borg (2003) argued, such findings were not surprising, given the myriad factors that hinder teachers’ practice of their beliefs, such as large class size, limited instructional time, and preoccupation with exam preparation. In the context of the current study, some of the factors that hampered the teachers’ practice of their preferred form of feedback were contextual factors, such as saving time due to their heavy workload. This concurred with recent EFL studies, such as those by Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıklı (2019) and Mao and Crosthwaite (2019). It should be noted that the student population in the latter study was non-English major, although they were taught by EFL writing teachers. It can therefore be argued that the misalignment of EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices, due to the contextual factors discussed above, tends to be the same, regardless of students’ major.

The practice of providing direct and indirect feedback, as discussed in Section 5.2.2, does not align with the sociocultural theory view (Section 3.5.4) that scaffolded feedback should commence with the provision of indirect feedback. This can demonstrate to the teacher the student’s ability to respond to feedback, whether in their essays, or in the form of oral feedback. If the students demonstrate an ability to handle such feedback, teachers should continue offering it in the same form, but if teachers find that their students experience challenges in handling such feedback, they should provide direct correction instead. Accordingly, students gradually shift from receiving regulated forms of feedback, namely direct feedback, to self-regulated forms, namely indirect feedback. As Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) explained, “all types of

feedback are potentially relevant for learning, but their relevance depends on where in the learner's ZPD a particular property of the L2 is situated" (p.480). They added that mediation must be contingent, hence teachers must balance the giving and withholding of assistance, according to the student's progression through a task. Their recommendation was not followed by teachers in the current study, in which all the students received a similar form of feedback, regardless of their state of progression. Teachers, as discussed in Section 6.2.2, only provide feedback on the final product, so multiple drafts are not employed. This limits the opportunity of scaffolding students and makes it difficult to track students' progress regarding their ZPD.

Second, in terms of the written commentary provided by both teachers in the current study, the students' written texts included commentaries in the form of both imperatives and statements, but each teacher reported a different purpose for this practice. Sara explained that she used commentary to highlight something that the student had failed to understand, such as the format of paragraphs (Section 5.4.2), or to provide a reference for the student when preparing for their exam (Section 5.4.1.3). However, Noor provided only four commentaries across all the coursework she marked, preferring to use a multitude of detailed comments if her students were sufficiently engaged to read her feedback (see Section 5.3.4.2).

Therefore, from the teachers' perspective, the types of error and their attitude towards the students were the factors that shaped their practice of providing written commentary in their feedback. This finding supported the argument of Goldstein (2004) that the quality of students' written texts guides the teacher's approach to providing commentary. For example, Goldstein states that students' grammatical and lexical errors shape teachers' practice of commentary feedback. This is also evident in this current study as in the case of Sara, who provided feedback according to the

type of errors her students made in their texts. Her practice reflected the claim of Goldstein (2004:67) that “attitudes towards each student, ... expectation of students at a particular level, and expectations of particular students” are factors that shape a teacher’s responses. Noor’s practice also reflected her attitude towards her students. According to Goldstein (2004), in order to study the contextual factors that affect the nature of a teacher’s commentary on their students’ work, the context and the factors that influence both teachers and students should be acknowledged. Therefore, I argue that the contextual factors that affected the teachers’ commentary in the current study are the expectations they had of their students regarding their writing homework, such as the length and format of the essay required (Section 5.2.1.2). These expectations were an influential factor in the teachers’ use of commentary feedback. Additionally, the focus of the teacher when responding to their students have been a factor, and they may have found it difficult to provide written commentary on content and rhetorical concerns in the way they believed was effective, because of the need in EFL teaching to correct students’ grammatical and lexical errors, as discussed in detail in the following section.

Moreover, Goldstein (2004) also reported that large class size is an influential contextual factor, stating that “full-time faculty with classes of 25–30 students each can find it quite difficult to give as much, as frequent, and as effective commentary as they would like” (Goldstein, 2004, p.66). This current study also considers this factor shaping both teachers’ belief and practice as discussed in Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, in particularly in correction with written feedback.

It can be argued that all of the factors discussed above shaped the teachers’ beliefs, and guided their feedback practice, supporting Goldstein’s (2004) argument regarding the role of context in shaping teachers’ approach to commentary provision.

#### 6.2.4 Feedback Focus

Another important area of feedback investigated in this study is the type of errors that the EFL writing teachers focused on when providing written feedback. The findings of the teacher-focused analysis revealed that both teachers had a similar focus when responding to their students' writing. Both teachers used direct, indirect and metalinguistic feedback on language form errors, written commentaries on the organisation of the essay, and indirect feedback on meaning (see Section 5.2.2.3). It was reported from the findings that teachers were consistent regarding their beliefs and practices in terms of feedback focus. They believed that the focus of feedback should be on language accuracy and organisation, which was aligned with their practices (see Section 5.3.2). This alignment between the teachers' beliefs and practices differed from the findings of the study by Lee (2009), who reported that EFL teachers in secondary school gave priority to language accuracy, despite believing that they should concentrate more on the content, due to the belief that students have enough language problems to tackle, without also needing to respond to content issues. However, in this current study, Noor explained that her focus was on spelling and sentence structure because students often made errors related to these areas. Sara also claimed that she was not concerned about the ideas in students' coursework, preferring to focus on correct sentence structure, which is demonstrated in her practice as she focused on accuracy, rather than on content. Although Lee's (2009) study was conducted on a different context and level, it showed that the focus of teachers' feedback is similar to that of the current study, whereas the beliefs of the teachers in the two studies differ. Similarly, the study of Junqueira and Payant (2015), which was conducted on a similar level to this current study (i.e., university level), but a different context (i.e., ESL), showed that 83.9% of the teacher's feedback focused

on language accuracy, and only 16.1% was on contents, although the teacher's beliefs were at odds with her practices.

Another justification reported by the teachers of this current study for focusing primarily on language form and organisation was the washback of the nature of the exam. This echoed the finding of Lee (2009) that the nature of the exams affected EFL teachers' practice and caused them to alter their approach to focus on students' language use, in order to help them pass the writing exam. Similarly, an EFL teacher in another study reported that she focused on the mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, and organisation of students' writing, paying no attention to the content, "because content is not assessed in the English language proficiency examination" (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990, p.160). This clearly suggests that the nature of exams in EFL contexts influences teachers' focus when providing feedback.

Another factor significantly impacting teachers' practice when providing feedback on coursework was the absence of marking criteria, as explained in Section 5.2.1.3. Although it can be said that teachers are expected by students to mainly focus on language errors (see Section 5.5.2) when giving feedback, a good balance between the amount of feedback on language accuracy, organisation and context seems appropriate. I assume the neglect of content-oriented feedback is because teachers are not fully following the objectives of the course, which says "help students compose a precise essay, evaluate and edit them for grammar, organisation, and content " for year three students, and "enable students to generate thought-provoking ideas" for year four.

## 6.2.5 The Overall Strategy Used When Responding to Students' Coursework

The findings from the analysis of feedback on students' written coursework and teachers' interviews revealed that both teachers believed in the importance and effectiveness of correcting or indicating all (or the majority) of students' language errors. In terms of their practice, both teachers reported to commence marking coursework by using a global approach to scan the overall organisation and structure of the essay, then proceeded to the details, focusing on the language errors made (Section 5.2.2.1). It was evident that the teachers' beliefs were reflected in their practice, because they believed providing feedback is a must to help students. They, moreover, stated that they provide feedback to aid students to identify the nature of their errors and to help students eliminate their errors in future written coursework, and to provide students with a source of study when preparing for exams (Sections 5.2.2.1 and 5.3.1). These findings, in term of language accuracy, are observed to be in line with Bitchener and Ferris (2012:177) who stated that L2 writing teachers assume that their responsibility is to help students to "produce high-quality final writing products". Clearly, the findings of this current study showed that teachers felt obliged to correct students' errors, which was described by Tribble (1996) as follows:

teachers who focus on forms ...tend to see errors as something that they have a professional obligation to correct and, where possible, eliminate. In such context, one of the teacher's main roles will be to instil notions of correctness and conformity. (p.37)

Another factor that was raised only by Noor explaining her approach of providing comprehensive feedback is to justify the marks awarded. She exemplified this in her narrative of accountability to her students, which made her tend to indicate and/or correct all errors in students' coursework, as discussed in Section 5.3.4.2. This

reflected the findings of the study by Lee (2008a), which reported that the teachers involved felt accountable to different stakeholders, including to their students, regarding the use of good feedback practice. Moreover, in the current study, Noor opined that her accountability was score-related, as she reported “I just indicate errors to justify their scores as they only ask about scores” (see Section [5.3.4.2](#)).

Nevertheless, these findings also contrasted with those of Lee (2003; 2008a) in EFL contexts, and Diab (2005b) in an ESL context, both of which identified a discrepancy between what the teachers involved believed and what they practised, regarding the effectiveness of the selective form of error correction that they believed in, and their practice of the comprehensive approach. The ESL instructor in Diab’s (2005b) study believed that comprehensive error correction “should be avoided, but she also seems to believe that grammatical errors should at least be pointed out to students, if not corrected” (p.33). Similarly, the teachers participating in Lee’s study (2008a) did not believe in the effectiveness of comprehensive error correction, but were governed by policy and other stakeholders, and were expected to provide comprehensive feedback as opposed to their preferred form, namely selective feedback. Meanwhile, the teachers in the current study demonstrated an alignment between their beliefs and practices regarding comprehensive error correction.

Overall, as discussed, teachers’ practices of feedback are observed to be influenced by a variety of factors that can be broadly grouped into context-related factors, teacher-related factors, and student-related factors. These factors lead to inconsistencies between teachers’ beliefs and practices. In addition, teacher-student engagements are seen to be affected and be lacking mainly due to the provision of feedback only on the final product, meaning that teacher-student communication is

largely absent throughout the process of feedback. This lack of engagement resulted in several difficulties for students, which are to be discussed later in this chapter.

From a sociocultural perspective as reported in chapter three, teachers should scaffold and engage with students to gradually enable them to become independent learners. This requires teachers to use mediation and gradually reduce the amount of help provided. In other words, within the process of feedback, teachers should track students' level of proficiency and provide feedback accordingly. However, the feedback employed in the context of this current study did not adhere to best practice, since teachers neglected the aspect of student engagement and lacked sufficient variation in terms of feedback type such as peer feedback. Although a mediation tool in the form of written feedback was provided, follow-up interaction between teachers and students was lacking.

Teachers should provide mediated feedback for students, which can direct students to pay attention to their errors and to solve their problems in writing. Feedback provided should help students understand their strengths and weaknesses in writing and what they can do to enhance their writing. It should not solely focus on language accuracy, but also contents and organisation, because writing is a composite of all these elements (Tribble, 1996).

In terms of teacher-student engagement during the process of giving feedback, teachers should enable students to be actively involved rather than playing the role of passive recipients. This could be achieved if peer feedback was successfully provided or teachers provided direct feedback and then gradually moved to indirect feedback. This should enable students to progress and transfer learning from one feedback situation to another. Teachers should also achieve the purpose of "teaching through and beyond" as described by Lantolf & Thorne (2006:226). Therefore, engagement



could be achieved if teachers as expert were to apply their form of feedback to introduce students as novices to such feedback.

Moreover, SCT emphasises the social and situated nature of learning, namely that individual learning cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. Although the practices employed by the teachers in the current study cannot be viewed as a solely individual-based process, the absence of peer feedback limited the students' interactions. In this regard, the role of peer feedback in writing classes cannot be neglected, from the SCT perspective, which argues that all types of learning and cognitive development are social in nature (Lantolf, 2000).

### **6.3 Students' Feedback Preference**

This study sought to understand students' expectations and experiences of the feedback provided in the EFL context. This section discusses the findings related to research question three: 'What are EFL students' expectations of teachers' feedback?'

The data showed that all the students in this study believed that feedback is effective, and they all wished to receive feedback to improve their writing, to enhance their learning, and to understand where they had made errors (Section 5.5.1). Each student explained their preferred form of feedback and its focus, indicating that feedback enhanced their language skills, as well as serving to highlight their writing strengths and weaknesses. These findings concurred with those of the studies conducted by Chiang (2004), Diab (2005b), Hamouda (2011), Hyland (2003), and Lee (2008b) in both ESL and EFL contexts (Section 3.6.3.1). Hence, the students in different language learning contexts viewed feedback positively, supporting the significance of feedback for students in the context of the writing classroom, in terms of learning a target language. The following sections discuss this further.

### 6.3.1 Feedback Sources and Types

The findings of this current study showed students' attitudes towards different types of feedback. First, students reported that they prefer receiving written feedback from their teachers as the main source of feedback that highlighted their writing strengths and weaknesses. The students therefore believed that feedback provision was the teacher's responsibility, which is aligned with the teachers' beliefs (Section 6.2.1). This may be related to their experience of the teacher as the only individual who provided feedback. Students' feedback preferences observed in this current study is echoed in other studies, one conducted in a Saudi university EFL context (Hamouda, 2011), and others conducted on EFL undergraduate students enrolled in an English course (Srichanyachon, 2012; Cohen et al., 2016). All these studies reported a similar finding, regardless of the contexts, namely that the students preferred to receive written feedback from their teachers, due to its usefulness for revision purposes, because they were confident in their teachers' knowledge and English skills. Types of written feedback preferred by students are to be discussed in detail in the following section.

Second, oral feedback gives students opportunities to negotiate and interact with teachers about their writing (Ellis, 2009). Although this type of feedback is rarely used in this current context, the majority of students reported that it is one of their preferred feedback types as they could ask their teachers for clarifications (Section 5.5). However, the findings reveal that even though students experienced difficulties, they did not ask teachers for clarifications. This was partly due to oral communication barriers (i.e., English language speaking difficulty). Lina, for example, stated that oral feedback should be conducted in Arabic, referring to her and teacher's mother tongue, which she favoured because of her lack of English language competence. This was

also supported by Noor, although she was not Lina's writing teacher, who stated that "students are shy to approach me because they do not want to speak English with me, so I allow them to ask in Arabic". Clearly, we can observe that language competence is a barrier, which prevents students benefiting from oral feedback. This drawback of oral feedback was raised by Goldstein and Conrad (1990) for those students who lack the relevant skills, particularly if they have little prior experience of meetings and oral communication. Moreover, teachers reported that although they offered students the opportunity of individual student-teacher conferences, they tended to prefer group conferences that occurred in class time more often due to the large number of students. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006a), some students might need individual attention from their teachers concerning their special needs which cannot be dealt with classroom oral feedback. Therefore, this area of feedback seems in a need of attention and more research in the context of EFL in the KSA.

Third, peer feedback was also discussed with the students, although the data demonstrated that this type of feedback was not employed in this study's context. The students' interviews revealed that some of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of this type of feedback, with some believing that while each individual student is responsible for their homework, providing feedback is the teacher's responsibility. Moreover, only one student reported that she would ask her peers to provide her with feedback, but only if their proficiency was excellent, while another believed that it was difficult to correct the grammar errors of her peers, and to provide comments on their work (Section 5.5.1). This indicated that this type of feedback was neither employed nor desired by the students, which could be due to their previous experience that caused them to lack trust in their peers' ability to provide feedback. The students' desire not to receive peer feedback corresponded with the teachers'

practices, perhaps indicating that the teachers were aware of their students' view of this type of feedback. This finding was consistent with that of previous studies, such as that by Montgomery and Baker (2007), who found that ESL students on an intensive ESL programme valued their teachers' feedback over that of their classmates, as they did not trust the linguistic abilities of their peers, who were still learning English. Another example of EFL student writers' opinions was provided in the study by Srichanyachon (2012), again revealing students' strong beliefs concerning their need for proficient corrective feedback from a proficient speaker, and the concern that if their peers were responsible for feedback provision, it was likely to be inadequate or inaccurate. This reflected the findings of the current study, in which only one student showed interests in asking only her most proficient peers for feedback, evidencing inexperience and lack of knowledge of how to apply peer feedback on the part of both the students and the teachers.

In short, all students were found to prefer written feedback the most, while some of them also preferred oral feedback. Peer feedback, on the other hand, was not favoured, as students were observed to rely on teachers as the main source of feedback. In other words, students prefer to follow a teacher-centred approach, in which the "legitimacy of information, and what constitutes knowledge rests with the teacher" (Kain, 2003:104).

### 6.3.2 Type of Written Corrective Feedback

As reported above, all students in this study preferred to receive written corrective feedback from their teacher. However, their preference towards types of written feedback varies. In this section this variety in students' preferences is discussed. The findings of students' interviews showed that most of the students preferred to receive direct feedback (Section 5.5.1), as they claimed that such feedback was clear and easy to understand, and that it helped them to identify their errors and understand what the correction is. However, others preferred to receive indirect feedback that includes the types of error highlighted, because they cannot identify their errors if only indicated.

In terms of direct feedback, students' views regarding its effectiveness concurred with those of the intermediate ESL learners in the study by Chandler (2003), who stated that direct feedback is helpful, especially with metalinguistic explanation, as it facilitates the rapid and effective comprehension of the correct forms and structures. In addition, Storch (2009) found that direct feedback was the most effective form of feedback for short writing tasks of between 150 and 200 words in length and believed that the feedback on such tasks helps learners to memorise the reformulated text. The students in the current study also have found the direct feedback provided on their short essays, in which each paragraph contained five sentences, easy to absorb. I believe there are various possible reasons behind students' preferences for direct feedback. First, students favour such a type of feedback because they can clearly understand their errors and refer to it when preparing for the exams. Second, feeling less confident to correct errors can also be a reason for students preferring direct feedback, as it provides the correct forms. Third, drawing on SCT, I believe that students favour such feedback because they are still in need of full scaffolding

and experts' guidance. Depending on indirect feedback may be considered beyond the students' capacity, and because of this they reported direct feedback is an effective tool for them to understand and have the corrected forms provided as a reference.

In contrast to direct feedback, there were two students (i.e., Hana and Maha) who preferred a mix of indirect and metalinguistic feedback. It is worth mentioning that this type of feedback was preferred only by these two students, who were studying in year four. I assume this preference was because those students like to challenge themselves correcting their errors, or they have already been provided with enough mediation throughout their previous study, thus they only require indication rather than correction. From a SCT view, it can be said that these students have moved to a higher level in their ZPD than being mediated by full experts' guidance (i.e., direct feedback).

Moreover, although students showed a preference towards both direct feedback and a mix of indirect and metalinguistic feedback, only one student in Year Three, namely Jodi, an excellent level student, expressed a preference for receiving a commentary on her texts in addition to direct feedback. Meanwhile, among the Year Four students, two, who are Hana (good level) and Maha (excellent level), stated a desire to receive a written commentary on the type of error they had committed, feeling that indirect feedback alone was not sufficient to facilitate understanding. This divergence in preference may be related to the students' differing levels of ZPD, but it might also be due to their lack of familiarity with indirect feedback that engendered a preference for direct forms of correction and commentary. Indeed, according to Hyland and Hyland (2001), the lack of familiarity with indirect feedback by ESL learners of low English proficiency may engender the misunderstanding of the messages implied. In addition, they argued that even with ESL learners of an advanced level, the value of providing clear feedback cannot be underestimated. This can be aligned with the

findings of this current study, which can be not only due to learners' language level, but also their level of ZPD, relating to how much scaffolding they require.

When comparing these views with those reported in previous studies on the efficacy of written feedback, it was apparent that there remains no conclusive answer to the question of the type of written corrective feedback that is most effective. The results of the previous studies discussed in Section 3.6.1 were conflicting and did not provide conclusive evidence that one type of error correction is more successful than others. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006a), such conflicting findings may be “due to the widely varying student populations, types of writing and feedback practices examined, and the diverse research designs employed” (p.85).

In sum, while some students may view a written commentary on their work as a challenge to be addressed, others may not have experienced such feedback before. As Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) explained, “learners' expectations and preferences may derive from previous instructional experiences, experiences that may not necessarily be beneficial for the development of writing” (p.173). Section 6.4, therefore, will discuss the experience and response of the students in the current study to the different types of written feedback they received, and how they dealt with it.

### 6.3.3 Focus of written Feedback

All the students in this study prioritised grammar feedback the most, followed by organisation of their work, while they were less concerned with feedback on the content of their coursework (Section 5.5.2). This could be argued to be due to their teachers' focus when teaching writing, as the teachers tended to prioritise grammar use, and feedback related to the course assessment that primarily assessed students' language accuracy. This finding reflected that of previous studies of students undertaking language courses, such as those by Leki (1991), Hyland (2003), Diab

(2006), and Diab (2005), which found that a prevalent focus on language form may be related to the type of subject major. According to Gabinete (2013), language teachers, namely those who teach communication skills, such as English language communication skills, and non-language university teachers, namely those in the field of the sciences, differed in their feedback focus. The study also found that the students on language-based courses preferred to receive feedback on language use, while those on non-language-based courses, such as engineering, preferred to receive less feedback on language use.

Therefore, the preference of students in the current study aligned with findings from previous studies showing that English language teachers and students give a greater emphasis to feedback on language form than other aspects such as the content and meaning of their work. This suggested that the form of the teachers' feedback aligned with their students' preference and expectation regarding its focus, as well as reflecting the fact that students' views regarding linguistic feedback are affected by their teachers' priorities, in terms of what is required of their writing.

#### 6.3.4 Strategies of Error Correction

Students were asked about their preference in terms of error correction strategies during interviews. The findings showed that all of the students in this study preferred to receive comprehensive feedback on all of their errors (Section 5.5.1), a preference also observed in other studies of university-level EFL students, such as those by Diab (2005), Hamouda (2011), and Kahraman and Yalvacb (2015). This can be attributed to their previous learning experience, or to a belief that their written texts should be error-free.



Students reported that they favour feedback to cover all their errors. For example, Asma explained that she used her teacher's feedback as a reference when studying for her exams, while other students reported the belief that they should be aware of all their errors, in order to avoid making them in their future writing, and in the exam. This strong preference for correcting each error is related to an anxiety on the part of the students that they would not be able to identify the errors in their writing if their teacher had not indicated them, an implication supported by Bitchener and Ferris (2012), who argued that students lack confidence in identifying their errors without help, and thus do not like their teachers to use a selective error correction approach.

Moreover, Sara reported that "a large amount of feedback is useful for students, otherwise students may think they do not have errors". It should be noted that this matter was not explored in the data generation phase, when working with the students, therefore it was only possible to speculate that if teachers do not address all of their students' errors, they may lose credibility, which was a finding of the study by Hamouda (2011), or that the students believe their spelling and grammar to be correct, which was a finding of the study by Nguyen and Ramnath (2016).

#### **6.4 Students' Experience of Teachers' Feedback**

This section discusses the final research question which is 'What is the students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework?'. The analysis of the student participants' experience of receiving feedback from their teachers found that they possessed different attitudes to their teachers' feedback practice. In this section, two themes, which are difficulties encountered by students in understanding the feedback, and the various student responses to feedback, are discussed.

### 6.4.1 Difficulties Encountered by Students in Understanding Teachers' Feedback

Previous studies on the difficulties experienced by ESL and EFL students in understanding their teachers' feedback, and the strategies they employed to address feedback suggested that some struggle to respond to their teachers' written questions, to understand the symbols and terminology used by their teacher, and even to read their teacher's handwriting (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995b; Leki, 1990; Chiang, 2004).

These studies demonstrated that students encounter a range of difficulties in understanding teachers' written feedback and use different strategies to address feedback. This section, therefore, discusses this issue in relation to the findings of the student interviews conducted for the current study regarding these difficulties, including excerpts from the written feedback provided by the teachers on their coursework. The interviews indicated that the students' difficulties were mainly related to a lack of understanding, uncertainty and misapprehension (Section 5.6.1).

First, a lack of understanding of feedback was observed from both year three and four students (Section 5.6.1), where the greatest difficulty was encountered when dealing with indirect feedback. The main indirect feedback strategies the students did not understand were the use of question marks, circles around errors, and underlining. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) claim that L2 students with "lower-level ... who are unable to self-edit even when an error is called to their attention" may find it difficult to identify and correct marked errors. Students of this current study, who are categorised as A2 (year three) and B1 (year four) in CEFR levels, also experienced difficulties in understanding the nature of the errors indicated by their teachers. The teachers' use of indirect feedback, a form of feedback that was not preferred by the majority of students, indicated that the teachers may have lacked an awareness of their students'

feedback preference, a suggestion that in line with Lee's (2013) argument that indicating errors without including correction is not valuable, as students require more specific and explicit advice. Chiang (2004), who conducted a study in an EFL secondary school found a similar lack of understanding regarding the symbols used by teachers that caused students difficulties. These findings implied that students' inability to understand indirect feedback symbols is a result of their teachers' failure to provide them with a list of the symbols they used, and to explain them.

Besides indirect feedback, another feedback practice that Maha reported was difficult to address is written commentary. She explained that when she received the comment "it is a process essay", she did "not know what [her] mistake [was]" (Section 5.6.2.1). This was because the feedback was ambiguous and lacked instruction regarding how the matter should be addressed. I assume this is because the teacher believed her students do not read feedback, so detailed feedback is not needed, as she claimed "students never read the feedback. So, no need for more comments" (Section 5.3.4.2). Another reason is related to the teacher's heavy workload, meaning that they did not have time to provide clearer feedback. As noted in Section 5.4.1.1, the teachers reported that the number of students in their classroom affected the quantity and quality of their written feedback. In line with this is a finding reported by Truscott (1996) and Goldstein (2004), who observed that the full-time nature of teachers' work can affect the quality of their feedback comments, as they lack the time to provide comprehensive, frequent, and effective commentary. Finally, it may be the case that as the teacher had already given the student the maximum mark, and no resubmission was required, the teacher abbreviated the feedback solely to indicate the error to the student.

However, Maha reported that she was unable to understand the purpose of the comment provided by her teacher, especially as the feedback was a general comment that lacked further instruction. This reflected the observation of Leki (1992) that “sometimes students are not sure exactly which part of their text a comment is addressed to ... sometimes the gist of the comment itself is unclear ... sometimes the comment seems inapplicable to the student” (p.122). In the interview, Maha was asked why she did not ask her teacher about the purpose of the comment, and she explained that she felt that since she had received a full mark for the essay, she thought it was not necessary to investigate the matter further. Therefore, a lack of engagement between the student and their teacher, and the teacher’s marking practice contributed to the student’s failure to understand the purpose of the written feedback.

The second type of difficulty encountered by the students was related to uncertainty regarding the meaning of some forms of indirect feedback. This meant that some of the students had to guess the meaning of the symbols used, such as circles, underlining, and arrows. In addition to the uncertainty expressed about indirect feedback, commentary feedback was also an area in which the participant Kloud expressed uncertainty in understanding, as she had to guess what the written commentary “long sentence” provided by her teacher meant. This may have been due to the teacher’s means of presenting comments on their students’ written texts. As Sommer (1982) explained, teachers’ comments on ESL students’ texts can be vague, and it is challenging for students when they are not provided with clear and direct instructions. Since the students in the current study seemed to be aware of the presence of errors, but not of the error type and how to address it, the provision of statement commentary that contained information for the students, without explicitly providing the correct form of the error, caused the students difficulty.

The third difficulty, misapprehension or the failure to understand, was another difficulty reported by the students in this study, particularly by the year three student Lina, who misunderstood the following comment provided by her teacher: “you need to write at least 3 paragraphs (1) introduction (2) body (3) conclusion” (Section 5.6.1.3). This example showed that students may misinterpret or misread clearly written feedback, a matter that may be related to the student’s level of proficiency. It can be argued that the teacher’s failure to initiate dialogue with their student regarding how to manage feedback was one of the factors that caused Lina’s misapprehension, as she reported that she used Google Translate to attempt to understand her teacher’s comment, a matter that may once again be related to the student’s level of proficiency impacting their understanding of the teacher’s comment. According to Hyland and Hyland (2019), classrooms typically seek to develop “trust, cooperation and a broad meshing of teacher learner agendas” (p.2), in order to maintain social harmony and to build a relationship between the teacher and their students. However, the ways in which teachers choose to deliver their feedback can influence their students’ responses and reactions to it, and the extent to which they use the feedback in their revisions, as well as having a significant impact on their writing development.

Although the teachers in the current study employed group teacher-student conferences with the whole class to discuss the main repeated errors (Section 5.3.4.1), there was an apparent lack of communication regarding students’ challenges that might be addressed using individual teacher-student conferences. This study found that the teachers employed the feedback only on the final product, which can limit the opportunities for students to request clarification. For example, Kloud, Lina, and Maha did not approach their teachers regarding their difficulty in dealing with their teacher’s feedback. Therefore, the lack of teacher-student conferences limited the

opportunities for the students to engage in the real process of interaction with their teachers. Language learning is “dialogically based”, where dialogic interaction enables an expert (i.e., the teacher) to construct a context in which novices (i.e., students) can participate in their own learning’ and in which the expert can support the novices (Ellis, 2009: 12). In such a context, this dialogue will demonstrate what a learner can and cannot do with the expert’s assistance.

There was a clear relationship between the difficulties encountered by students when dealing with written feedback, and the lack of teacher-student conferences that guide students through the different stages of the text-writing process (Keh, 1990; Hyland & Hyland, 2006c). Consequently, due to the lack of communication with their teachers, the students in the current study did not fully understand some of the commentary and indirect feedback provided, which limited their awareness of important issues with their writing, and also limited their understanding of the feedback.

The sociocultural perspective emphasises the importance of the social and dialogic nature of feedback (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). As discussed in the literature review (Section 3.5), the emphasis on social interaction, collaboration, and joint problem solving is embedded in Vygotsky’s conceptualization of ZPD. This interaction can be achieved through scaffolding, with the effects of feedback dependent on how it is discussed and adapted in the course of the negotiation between the teacher and the students. In terms of the interaction between the teachers and students in SCT, the feedback in the ZPD “must be negotiation between the novice [students] and the expert [teachers]” (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994, p.469). However, the students in the current study exhibited a limited attempt to interact with their teachers regarding the feedback challenges they experienced. Moreover, the writing model and the single

draft applied in this context conflict with the sociocultural principle that interaction and dialogue is key in shaping students' ideas during the writing process (Salter-Dvorak, 2016).

The issues regarding the difficulties in understanding feedback were therefore interrelated. While each individual factor might cause difficulty in understanding the feedback, a combination of all or some of the factors could also produce the same result. In other words, students' failure to understand written feedback, and to communicate with their teacher can cause difficulties. However, if redrafting was to be a requirement in instances where the number of students concerned is less than 20, as Noor suggested, better quality and quantity of feedback leading to a better understanding of the comments provided would be possible.

## 6.4.2 Students' Responses to Feedback

As discussed previously, the students in this study discussed various difficulties encountered when dealing with feedback, and they also demonstrated a range of responses and approaches to dealing with feedback. These responses are categorised as emotional and critical, which are discussed as follows.

### 6.4.2.1 Emotional Responses

All six students in this study exhibited an acceptance of written feedback, although they expressed different emotions towards the various types of teacher feedback involved. The first of these was a feeling of sadness and shock, as illustrated by Jodi, after receiving her teacher's written feedback on the first written essay of the coursework, although she preferred to receive comprehensive feedback on every error. The reason for this reaction was that her teacher had underlined the same error repeatedly throughout the essay (Section 5.6.3.1). This practice was also reported in

an EFL context by Lee (2008), in which the teachers concerned focused on the weak aspects of their students' writing, without commenting on their strengths. The practice of underlining every error, or 'using too much red ink' was described by Hyland (1990) as "obviously disheartening" (p.279) in the context where the process approach was used. This practice is also found to be discouraging in the product approach employed in the current EFL context, as it generated negative emotions.

The second emotional response to different written commentaries reported by the students in the current study was the feeling of gratitude and appreciation (Section 5.6.3.1). The students found written commentaries, specifically imperative commentaries that told them directly what to do, to be beneficial and clear, for example in the case of Maha and Asma. This reflected the observation of Sugita (2006) that "teachers' imperative comments seem to be direct instructions which have a feeling of authority so that students pay a great deal of attention to teacher feedback, follow the instructions and revise the drafts" (p.40). Therefore, in general students often view imperative comments as valuable, and avoid repeating the errors concerned, which may be due to their understanding of the errors made, or to the fact that the function of this type of comment is clear, because it provides direct instructions.

The last emotional response reported by the students was the acceptance of teachers' written feedback, and of group teacher-student conferences, namely the acceptance of their teachers' authority. The students showed an acceptance of written comments, with none of them reporting that they ignored such comments. Meanwhile, their acceptance of group teacher-student conferences was reflected in the fact that they documented what their teacher explained during the session. The fact that the students claimed to read their teachers' comments contrasted with the teacher Noor's belief that her students did not read her comments (Section 5.4.3), demonstrating that,



contrary to her belief, the students sought to benefit from the imperative feedback provided. This concurred with the findings of a recent study conducted in an EFL university context by Mahfoodh (2017), in which most of the students (75.2%) exhibited an acceptance of written feedback as a source of learning when revising their drafts. Meanwhile, in a different context, the study by Ferris (1997) found that students revised their written texts more effectively when they received comments in the form of imperatives. In the current study, Maha and Asma's texts showed that they used the imperative comments on previous texts when composing the next text. Although this study did not seek to explore the effect of the written commentaries on the students' writing, it was significant that the students accepted, read, and considered their teachers' feedback, whether written or oral, if it was clear, provided instruction, and fulfilled their needs.

#### 6.4.2.2 Critical Responses

In addition to the emotional responses presented above, a prominent response that ran consistently through the student interviews was a critical response to the different types of teacher feedback on their written texts (Section 5.6.3.2). For example, Asma and Hana considered feedback that indicated errors without providing the correct form required to be ineffective and unnecessary. This response indicated that the students did not utilise the indirect feedback in this instance. The study by Mustafa (2012) also reported that the Saudi ESL students criticised indirect feedback and the use of error codes by their teachers. This contrasted to a degree with the findings of the current study, as while the students demonstrated a critical response towards the use of indirect feedback, they accepted the use of error codes, possibly because they had received an explanation of the meaning of these error codes.

hence, in general the students in the current study believed that error code was comprehensible, as it clarified the type of errors, such as the sentence structure, even if they found their errors difficult to correct. In another words, they understood what such codes meant; for instance, 'ST' indicated an error in the sentence structure. Since only a single draft was employed in this context, the students did not respond to the teacher's feedback. However if a redrafting was required, another issue might have been that students could not correct errors when the correction was not provided. Lee (2005) also argued that although students tend to understand the error codes used, they may not know how to correct the error concerned. This study involved secondary school students who were heterogeneous in terms of their English proficiency level, and found that the provision of error codes without correction was not beneficial, as the students required more specific and explicit advice. Although this study was conducted in a different context and level, its findings would likely have been reflected by those of the current study if the students had been required to redraft their work, as they reported that they found it difficult to understand how to correct their errors. This was an interesting finding, as the students expressed a strong desire to receive error correction feedback, or at least feedback that identified the type of error, even if they were not required to redraft their work. This suggested that they wanted their errors to be corrected by their teacher, believing that identifying the type of error involved would help them to understand the matter of concern, but preferring their teacher to correct their errors directly. However, there was substantial evidence in the data (Section [5.4.3.2](#)) that the teachers explain the meaning of the error codes during the session, but there remained a lack of evidence that they provided information on how to address the errors concerned. Therefore, while the EFL students benefited from the use of

error codes in identifying their errors, as it encouraged them to consider the error type indicated, they remained unable to respond to them.

The second type of written feedback that was criticised by the students in the current study was the comment in the statement form. For example, Kloud criticised the use of general comments that did not provide instruction regarding how to address the comment, and Sara provided an example of such a comment (“very short conclusion”). As Keh (1990) explained, “ineffective or insufficient comments” do not provide enough information, and instead teachers should read students’ texts as a concerned reader to a writer... as a person, not a grammarian or grade-giver” (p.301). Evidence from the students’ coursework in the current study supported Sommer’s (1982) view that “teacher comments can take students’ attention away from their own purpose in writing a particular text and focuses attention on the teachers’ purpose of commenting” (p.149), suggesting that teachers lack the necessary understanding of what their students hope to achieve, causing them to respond critically.

The reason for such critical responses on the part of the students in the current study may have been related to their level of proficiency, or to the fact that they may not have been trained to deal with such feedback, causing the lack of understanding, as discussed in Section 6.4.1. The study by Mahfoodh (2017) reported slightly different student responses to feedback, such as rejection of feedback and frustration regarding “the direct coded, making requests, and grammar/editing types of teachers’ written feedback” (p.66), but these were also related to the students’ lack of understanding of certain forms of written feedback. As Hyland (2000) observed in the ESL context, effective communication between students and their teachers is one of the factors that can influence students’ successful use of written feedback. Therefore, it can be argued

that the lack of one-to-one communication in the context of the current study contributed to the students' critical response to teacher feedback.

The students' critical response may also have been related to the teacher-centred approach employed that caused the students to rely on their teachers to correct their errors, although they consequently criticised the written feedback types that they considered to be too vague for them to understand. In some cases, the students suggested forms of constructive criticism that their teachers' written feedback might take, reflecting their appreciation of the importance of feedback. Therefore, the students' critical and emotional responses to certain types of written feedback did not indicate a reluctance to receive any feedback at all, rather they wanted to receive direct feedback or clear comments regarding how to tackle errors, such as comments in an imperative form. The study by Hamouda (2011) conducted in an EFL context that was similar to that of the current study, namely a Saudi university that also used a similar textbook, namely *Effective Academic Writing*, found that 55% of the students liked to receive feedback in statement form. This preference was due to its advantages for identifying mistakes easily, and for avoiding misunderstandings or confusion. However, in contrast to the students in the current study, the teachers in Hamouda's study employed the process-based approach that allowed students to revise and redraft their work, which may have encourage their preference for statement form feedback.

In summary, the EFL students in the current study exhibited gratitude and appreciation for direct feedback and imperative comments but expressed critical responses towards indirect feedback and some written comments, believing they did not provide sufficient direction in how to correct their work. Thus, the teachers' practice of using statement comments was inconsistent with their students' preference, which

was reflected in their responses to the type of written feedback used. The students viewed direct and imperative feedback as an appropriate means of highlighting their errors and providing them with guidance in how to improve their writing. Meanwhile, their acceptance of direct feedback may indicate that the learners in this context wished to distinguish or compare between their errors and the correct form of the language usage in the target language. Feedback that succeeded in doing this encouraged them to read it, a claim supported by Bitchener and Ferris (2012), who stated that learners' conscious observation of the target language items, and meta-linguistic commentary engenders successful language learning. Therefore, the students in the current study may have benefited from noticing the differences between the errors they made, and the corrections provided by their teachers.

## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter highlighted the main points identified in the analysis of the feedback provision approach employed by the teachers and discussed their implications. The points discussed in this chapter related to the web of contextual factors that was explored across the analysis of the datasets generated for this study. First, the absence of a feedback policy and feedback guidelines in the context, and second, the absence of teacher training played a major role in how the teachers responded to and processed written feedback.

The next chapter considers the implications of the current study, and provides recommendations for policymakers and EFL writing teachers, based on the study's findings, as well as discussing the study's contribution to knowledge in this area.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 Overview**

This chapter undertakes a broader discussion of both pedagogical and research concerns regarding feedback in the context of EFL in Saudi universities. First, it summarises the main key findings of this study, including the significant implications for both practice and policymakers with regard to improving the status of feedback provision in the university EFL context. Second, it considers this study's theoretical, contextual, and methodological contribution to the issue of feedback in relation to EFL writing. Finally, it suggests ways future work can be undertaken in order to build on the current findings in furtherance of research in this area.

### **7.2 Summary of the Study and its Key Findings**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the actual feedback of the teacher research participants in relation to their written corrective feedback on students' essays. The second objective was to understand their approach to said feedback through interviews with the teachers participating in this research. The third objective was to examine the factors behind the teachers' beliefs and practices. The fourth objective was to understand the students' expectations, along with their preferences, followed by a comparison with their experience of their teachers' actual feedback practices. The final objective was to explore the influence of the contextual, institutional and situational factors, as well as other issues found to be present at Prince University in Saudi Arabia.

This study was undertaken in the Department of English at the recently-established Prince University. A case study approach was adopted to collect multiple data instruments, consisting of: first, semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers and

EFL students in the third and fourth years; second, students' written coursework provided with the teachers' written feedback, undertaken over a period of a single semester.

In order to achieve the above objectives, this study addressed four main Research Questions (RQs). The first RQ explored the process of giving feedback in a Saudi university EFL context. The second RQ investigated the teachers' understanding of feedback and beliefs about giving feedback on EFL students' written coursework. The third RQ considered the EFL students' expectations of their teachers' feedback, including their preferences and general responses. The fourth RQ investigated EFL students' specific experience of teachers' feedback on their written coursework, including their reactions and the related challenges.

The first RQ exploring the process of giving feedback in a Saudi EFL university context was answered revealing that the teachers mainly applied the product approach (i.e. single draft). They were found to apply four different types of written feedback: commentary, direct, indirect, and metalinguistic. These different feedback styles were observed to be undertaken in response to the various types of errors found in the students' coursework. The teachers also provided oral feedback, giving general explanations to the whole class, only when the students asked for further clarifications, or in the event of recurring errors. The teachers' feedback was found to focus primarily on language form and essay organisation, with less focus on content.

The findings for the second RQ, which investigated teachers' attitudes, preferences, and views of giving feedback on students' written essays in this university EFL context, were as follows. First, both teachers reported that giving feedback to students is their responsibility and a part of their duty as teachers.

Second, they believed that feedback was provided to help to improve students' competence in their written work, including being able to refer to this information (i.e., the feedback provided) when preparing for examinations. Third, they considered that giving feedback and highlighting students' errors justified and explained the scores awarded. Fourth, the teachers believed that giving scores maximised students' engagement and motivated them to pay attention to the feedback given, particularly as both teachers assumed that their students did not tend to read their feedback. Fifth, teachers were found to prefer oral feedback for the entire class when it came to explaining recurring errors, as well as the use of indirect feedback on students' coursework. This was found to be due to the size of their classes and the large number of essays they were consequently required to mark. Sixth, the teachers valued one-to-one oral feedback, as they felt that this was more beneficial to their students, and also gave them the ability to provide direct instruction. Finally, the teachers were found to share the opinion that students tended to lack interest in feedback, being only interested in their scores.

The third RQ that focused on the students' expectations of their teachers' feedback revealed that students preferred written feedback, and in particular direct corrective feedback, while peer feedback was the least preferred. In addition, the students shared a preference for feedback focusing on language form. However, they also expected their teachers to provide some feedback concerning organisation. It can be deduced that such expectations may have arisen in response to their previous experience of teachers' feedback.

Finally, the fourth RQ investigated EFL students' experience of teachers' feedback on their written essays, including their responses and any resulting challenges.



It was found that the students faced three major difficulties in relation to feedback. Firstly, a lack of understanding; secondly, uncertainty; and thirdly, misapprehension. These difficulties are found to emerge due to the lack of engagement when the feedback was received, and students' tendency to neglect student-teacher dialogue. The former refers to the fact that students did not respond to the feedback provided as it was only provided on the final product. The latter concerns the students' neglect in inquiring about ambiguous feedback. The students' responses revealed that they also experienced emotional and critical responses to their teachers' feedback.

### **7.3 Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this study have a number of significant implications for policy, theory and practice, as well as any subsequent research. These will provide practical recommendations for teachers and administrators, while at the same time offering an insight for English language researchers in relation to the issue of written work and the process of giving beneficial feedback. This section therefore outlines several implications and recommendations for teachers of writing and educational authorities in an EFL context at university.

#### **7.3.1 Feedback Policies and Guidelines**

One of the most important practical implications emerging from this current study concerns the absence of any feedback policy and guidelines for giving feedback. As a result, teachers felt that it was their responsibility to find and create their own feedback guidelines, thus shaping a tendency towards developing a non-standardised, and in some instances, an idiosyncratic practice of giving feedback.

These limitations highlighted by the current study indicate the need for consistent institutional guidelines appropriate for the EFL context, which can be established taking full account of the objectives of the writing textbook and the qualities being measured.

From this study therefore, I suggest that the English Language Department should create guidelines for establishing a standardised practice of giving feedback that is appropriate for the EFL students' levels. This will enable teachers to follow these guidelines to ensure their written feedback is clear and effective, thus enabling their students to both understand and benefit from such feedback. These guidelines could therefore prove to be helpful and useful in providing a bridge between the understanding and the expectations of the teachers and those of their students.

The syllabus used in this context includes a guideline that is well designed, appropriate and easy to follow as it shows a check list that helps not only to focus on the most relevant issues of writing, but also helps teachers to track their students' level of proficiency and understand their individual needs. It will be useful for the students if the teacher discusses it with their students at the beginning of each unit and how each guideline has its purpose. The Table 7-1 below is an example of one of the guidelines provided by the syllabus for a descriptive essay. I suggest the total score is not calculated with the students' module score. However, it is for teachers and students themselves to track their progress in writing and help teachers to focus on and monitor students' learning and for students to better understand their own knowledge and level of proficiency in order to improve it and increase the academic achievement (i.e., formative feedback).

Table 7-1: Feedback Guideline

<b>Writing task:</b> People have strong feelings about food. They associate food with important events and people in their lives. Write a descriptive essay about a food you feel strongly about—one you really like or dislike.					
Criteria	Marks				
	20	15	10	5	0
The essay effectively responds to the writing task.					
The essay is well organized, with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.					
The introduction includes a hook, background information, and a clear thesis statement.					
The body paragraph(s) use adjectives, prepositional phrases, and similes to make the description more vivid.					
The writer uses proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.					

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_ / 100

### 7.3.2 Teacher Training in Prince University

One of the most significant implications of this research was that of the absence of teacher training could potentially play a major role in how teachers respond to and process written feedback. Both teachers in this study revealed that they had not been given any training or been offered workshops on the teaching of writing or the provision of feedback. It can be argued that the absence of any professional training on methods of responding to students' written coursework is a symptom of institutional failure to empower teachers to develop their individual competencies. Therefore, I recommend that the English language department at Prince University should provide opportunities for teachers to expand and develop their knowledge regarding teaching methodology, including providing feedback during the writing process. The knowledge gained from such training courses would increase the professional confidence of teachers, and

have a positive impact on students' learning and the development of their writing skills. This could be achieved by organising continuous in-service professional development courses, as well as workshops and training sessions and seminars, focusing on the teaching of writing and the process of giving feedback. These could be led by experts in the field of teaching writing and focus not only on the issue of written feedback but also on different types of feedback. Such training would enable teachers to manage contextual factors which could potentially prevent them from successfully applying effective teaching methodology and feedback and assist them in overcoming the considerable demands of giving feedback to large numbers of students. This would have the potential to maximise the positive impact of their teaching, as well as their provision of feedback, along with assisting students to work in a collaborative environment.

### 7.3.3 Recommendations for EFL Writing Teachers

This study found that the teachers of English who teach writing in the English Language Department at Prince University discussed a number of different methods of teaching, assessing students' coursework and providing feedback. While this is the course of action expected all teachers of English, I would further recommend that, instead of merely having ad hoc discussions, 'a pedagogical action research' be properly and regularly conducted – which, in the educational field, is a systematic, self-reflective enquiry that teachers undertake in order to critically evaluate their pedagogical models and then adjust and fine tune them to fit the current context. It is fundamentally about improvement in teaching and learning practice in a university context (Arnold and Norton, 2020:329). Conclusions derived from the teachers' pedagogical action research could then be shared in positive and supportive environments such as CPD (Continuous Professional Development) sessions where

teachers can learn from each other in non-threatening collaborative circumstances, or make collective decisions that would facilitate the smoother running of their writing classes. For example, decisions can be made about developing their own ways of responding to students' writing and ideally equip themselves with an appropriate *modus operandi* concerning the provision of feedback in writing classrooms. A standardised correction error codes, for instance, can be decided upon, instituted and used by all teachers across writing classes of all years and be made an integral aspect of learner training, so that students will be able to readily identify the positive aspects of their writing as well as the kind of errors they tend to make, right at the outset of their writing course. It would also simplify and encourage proofreading and editing on the part of the students. However, all this may only be achieved if teachers are granted time for professional development as part of their contract. Therefore, allowing them time to practice action research would help to improve practitioners' practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practise (Kemmis,2009: 462).

In addition, this study identified that the students depended primarily on their teachers for correcting their coursework, while at the same time disregarding peer feedback. I therefore suggest that it is crucial for teachers to assist their students to become independent and responsible learners. This can be achieved if teachers abandon the attitude that "it is my responsibility", and instead implement aspects of the process approach, particularly for higher level students, who are capable of revising and rewriting their texts. This can be done if the teachers follow the designed model that is provided by the syllabus (see Section 2.5) which encourages the process approach. This model allows for using multiple drafts and encourages formative feedback. By considering this model and formative feedback, an interactive process

between teachers and learners will be achieved which would also help students in their zone of proximal development to progress to the next step in their writing. Therefore, applying a multiple draft approach will not only help students to learn about the writing objectives but also learn about the scaffolding they will receive from teachers and peers in order to achieve learning objectives.

However, it can be argued that teachers are already overloaded with the work, and thus, a criticism of introducing multiple drafts would be that they would only serve to increase the workload of teachers even more. Furthermore, having only formative assessments can also be criticised because teachers assume that students only submit their work to receive marks (i.e., if there were no scores, teachers believe students would not submit).

The following suggested model, illustrated in Figure 7-1 , is an adapted and modified model from the one suggested by the syllabus. It is modified based upon working with the findings generated throughout this study and to fit the context. It also adapted some steps from the model that already apply in the context (Section 5.2.1), but modifications to those steps have also been made. As the application of this suggested model is teachers' responsibility, they should receive sufficient training from the English language department, as discussed in Section 7.3.2, to apply this model effectively.

Moreover, the suggested model is expected to provide a number of benefits to both teachers and students, which are as follows. First, both parties would benefit from applying the process approach, which I expect to be a better fit than the current applied model for the context, as students can apply several drafts before being assessed. Two, the model would reduce the teachers' workload, which can be achieved by the

application of peer feedback. This is believed to develop students' writing when it is viewed by others, as Hyland and Hyland (2006) claim. Third, the model would improve the interaction between teachers and students in terms of feedback practice, which can be achieved when students are given the chance to individually meet/inquire of the teachers. As already reported from the context, students do not engage with the teachers as their scores would not be changed as a result of doing so. However, allowing students to ask in advance of the final product submission about their writing, I assume, would surely motivate them to ask, as they aim to receive the highest scores possible, and being able to consult teachers about their writing would help student submit the best product they were capable of.

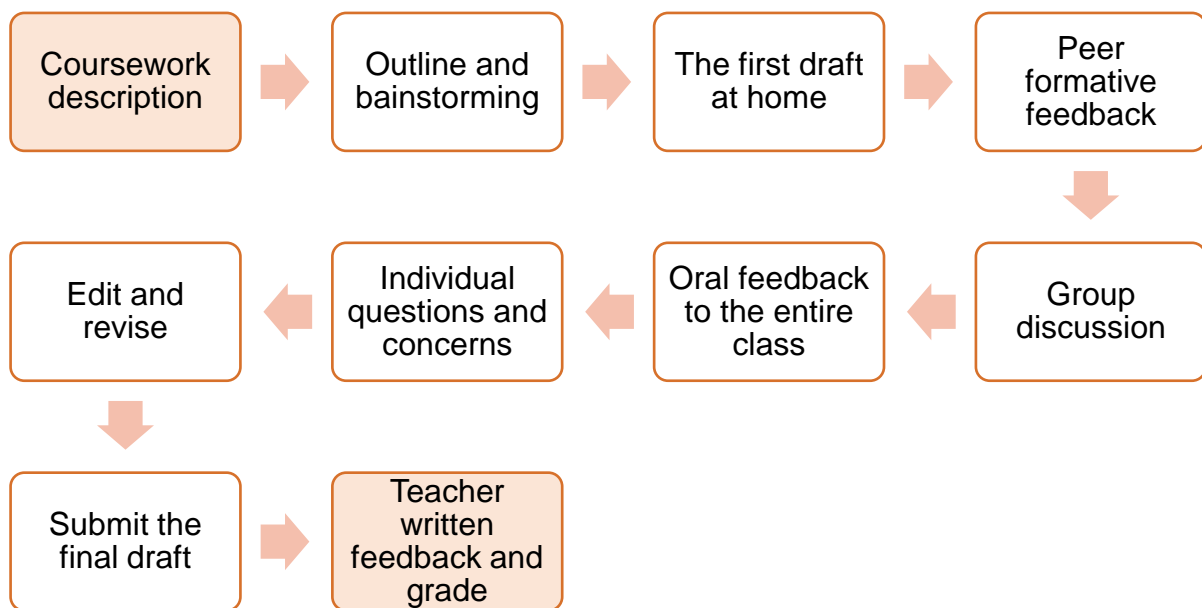


Figure 7-1: Suggested Model for providing feedback

As illustrated in the figure, the suggested model follows a sequence of steps. First, teachers should provide a coursework description, which should include the deadline, and the coursework requirements. Teachers, if needed, can explain the coursework orally, which would be recommended to be applied in the first writing sessions of the semesters to familiarise students with requirements. Teachers should

also explain the role and importance of peer feedback in these early sessions following the training steps mentioned below. This is because students will be required to practise it in the following sessions, as explained later in this model. I believe it would be beneficial for teachers to also explain the purpose of each form of feedback to their students, including the role of the students themselves, to help them understand the rationale for the use of certain types of feedback, whether provided by their teachers or peers.

Regarding peer feedback training, Schunn and Wu (2020) state that training students on the use of peer feedback should be conducted to promote the learning potential in peer feedback. As training takes place in the early session of the first semester, teachers should raise students' awareness of the significance of positive attitudes towards peer feedback and its benefits for both student writers and reviewers (Hu, 2005; Yu and Lee, 2016). Peer feedback is beneficial as one to one teacher student feedback is not practical due to the large amount of coursework and is extremely time consuming (Salter-Dvorak, 2016). During training, the following steps to train students on peer feedback are suggested. These steps are inspired by the training course conducted by Min (2005) and the peer feedback techniques recommended by Alnasser (2018) for novice EFL and ESL contexts, where minor amendments were made due to the time constraints and number of students to fit with the current context. This training should be implemented in two phases, namely in-class and at-home. Before training begins, teachers should have two samples of coursework that were written by previous students – possibly on two different genres – to use while training. During the in-class phase, before giving students any of these samples, teachers should introduce a peer feedback worksheet that the students are to use while peer reviewing. As the textbook used in the context already provides a



peer editor's worksheet (refer to Figures [Figure 2-8](#) and [Figure 2-9](#)), it is good to try this, although it is not easy to apply as it mainly focuses on the content. On the other hand, Min's guidance sheet ([Appendix 12](#)) is a good place to start and train students on as it contains content and grammatical accuracy which will develop students' analytical skill as well as to focus on the grammatical accuracy. Teachers then should explain the use of the contents of the provided peer feedback worksheet as learners may need time to familiarise themselves with its usage, which is considered by Min (2006) as an important step. Teachers should also emphasise how to give feedback on both language and content aspects of writing. Once students understand the aim and use of the worksheet, they should then be provided with a copy of the first sample that teachers already prepared. Teachers should then ask students to work individually to complete the peer feedback worksheet by reviewing the sample provided. This would also improve their self-evaluation and revision skills so that they can take greater control over their own writing (Lundstrom and Baker, 2009; Lee, 2009). Once the worksheet is completed, students should be asked to work in pairs to discuss their provided feedback on the worksheet. The purpose of this step is to resolve ambiguities in feedback given and discuss each other's suggestions for revision. Teachers should then go through the sample provided with all students and fill the peer feedback worksheet on the board. Teachers should also ensure that the provided feedback is constructive, specific and not vague, and identify problems and provide suggestions. These particular elements are effective in peer feedback to produce revision and learning (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Teachers should then select samples of the students' peer feedback worksheets either randomly or on a voluntary basis and go through them with all students to identify strengths and weaknesses of the comments provided. This can enable students to learn from each other's practice of peer

feedback and from teachers' oral comments. In the at-home phase, the second sample of the coursework written by previous students should be given to students for further practice on the use of the peer editor's worksheet. This can be done as homework, where students should be allowed to ask teachers any further questions to ensure that it is clear to all students.

Second, students should be asked to plan by brainstorming and creating an outline, as already applied in this context, to familiarise themselves with the topic they are required to write about and the relevant vocabulary (see Section [5.2.1](#), for more information about the use of brainstorming applied in the context).

Third, students should be asked to complete the first draft of the coursework at home (i.e., as already applied by only Sara, but not Noor, as she requires her students to do the coursework during the class). I believe doing the coursework at home would enable students to read and research more about the topic or genre required rather than being asked to complete it during the class session. Moreover, students would have more time (i.e., about a week to do the coursework, as the writing session occurs once a week), which would enable them to deliver the work in the best possible presentation and structure, as they can draft and revise this multiple times.

Fourth, once the first draft is completed, which should be done by the following week after the assignment was given, peer feedback can be applied. Students, under the teachers' supervision, should be able to provide each other with written and/or oral feedback. This is expected to enhance the students' social skills and awareness of errors and the importance of feedback, as each students' work would be dependent on their peers' feedback and comments. Peer feedback would also increase the oral interaction among learners, which would create a social environment conducive to

effective scaffolding (Hyland, 2001b). Peer feedback should not take longer than 15 minutes of the session, to allow time needed for other learning objectives.

The time suggested is dependent on the length of the coursework, but based on the coursework reviewed in this current study, it appears sufficient. During this time (i.e., 15 minutes) the teacher can involve themselves with the students and encourage them to stay on task and respond to students' concerns.

Fifth, students, after receiving the peer feedback, should be divided into small groups (i.e., depending on the class size), and discuss the most common errors to improve each other's writing. Each group should be assigned a leader (i.e., on a volunteer basis) whose responsibility is to report the common errors to the teachers.

Sixth, teachers should then give oral feedback to the entire class, addressing the common errors reported as well as the concerns of each group. This is expected to help not only the students who made those errors, but also help other students avoid making them (i.e., learning from each other's errors).

Seventh, the teacher should give students the opportunity to raise individual questions and concerns. Although this stage is already applied in the context, it is included in this suggested model due to its importance. It is worth mentioning that this stage comes after the application of several levels of feedback (peer feedback, group discussion and oral feedback), meaning that it is unlikely that students would have too many questions by this stage. In this regard, it was also observed from the findings that there is a need for teachers and students to communicate with each other on a one-to-one basis in their first language which is Arabic, and for this to not simply focus on texts and difficulties related to written work, but also involve discussions of different types of feedback and approaches to the teaching of writing.

Eighth, having provided the students with such opportunities for learning from their errors and receiving various types of feedback, students, at this stage, are expected to edit and revise their draft addressing their peers' feedback and improving their writing, taking into account the knowledge received during the group discussion and the teacher's oral feedback session. Finally, students should now be asked to submit this coursework for their teachers' written feedback and grade. Although I would not personally suggest the inclusion of grades, the data collected show that grades are the only motivation that students have to make these submissions. Therefore, grades were proposed in this suggested model. It is worth mentioning that all the steps suggested in the model are aligned with the time allocated for each piece of coursework as observed from the data collected, where each unit was taught over three sessions (i.e. one session per week). The model also follows this, as in the first session, teachers are expected to outline the coursework and the following session is when peer feedback, group discussion and oral feedback take place. In the third session, students should be asked to hand in their coursework.

Furthermore, if teachers still experience very high requests for one-to-one meetings from students and/or are overloaded with work, mentors can be appointed. I believe this is one of the unique ideas that should be introduced in such a context, as it is still uncommon in Saudi educational environments (AL-Garni et al., 2019). Mentors can be a group of advanced level students who have already completed the desired year (i.e. Master's students). They should coach and teach students in small groups or provide assistance when needed. Mentoring sessions should have clear goals, roles, and expectations which are explicit, specific, attainable, and realistic in order to be successful, while both mentors and mentees should be aware of what is expected of them in their respective roles.

This could enable each party to understand their responsibilities in the process, to assist the teacher in managing the workload. It is safe to assume this would enable teachers to communicate with their students via these mentors, which could also augment their students' receptiveness towards and understanding of the information received from other, as that transaction would take place in an informal and more relaxed atmosphere. Crucially, it would reduce the teachers' workload.

At the beginning of the semester, teachers could send an email to all students at the advanced level requesting volunteers to take the role of mentors. Later, the teacher may need to send another email to explain what is required from mentors, and what their roles entail. I believe that this idea could lead to successful peer feedback and increase the social interaction among the students and thus, help teachers to assess their students' peer feedback.

Personally, after reading the literature review exploring different types of feedback and the findings of my study, and the suggestions that I have made, I believe that if I am to teach writing in this researched context, I would not teach without implementing peer feedback during the session. Although I do not have experience in teaching writing, I believe careful planning is essential to the success of teaching writing and providing feedback, in particular peer feedback.

Having said that, I would also suggest some guidelines for providing written feedback that teachers should follow. The findings reveal valuable insights into students' expectations and experience, and teachers should take into account their students' preferences and attitudes towards feedback as they respond to students' writing. However, for teachers to respond successfully to their students' coursework, they should maximise their awareness of their students' individual needs.

For this to happen, I suggest the following principles, adapted, and modified from Ferris (2003:119), which English teachers of writing should consider when providing written feedback:

1. Teachers should explain either in a handbook or orally their feedback procedures to the students at the beginning of the semester to inform students of what they should expect from their teachers. For example, the handbook should include the classroom activities, number of drafts, process of the feedback types that they will be involved in, and the grading criteria.
2. Teachers should not feel that they have to correct every error and deal with every problem in the students' coursework. From the sociocultural perspective, teachers should not do the task for the learner, but rather only facilitate the learners' attempts in developing aspects they have not yet mastered independently. Then individuals can manage their learning (Bitchener and Storch, 2016).
3. Teachers should make the written feedback fit the students' individual abilities and needs (i.e., in accordance with the cognitive and affective needs of the individual learner). For example, indirect feedback might not be appropriate for every student so teachers should construct feedback appropriate to their students' individual needs. It is important to consider their students' strengths and weaknesses in providing written responses and not to give all of them the same amount and type of feedback. At present the findings show feedback is mainly delivered through the use of error codes (e.g., *ST* for sentence structure) as in Noor's case. The students show that they understand what this means; however, they find it difficult to respond appropriately and to self-correct. If I were the teacher, in addition

to the oral feedback that they employ in the class for all students, I would consider the students' level of proficiency and combine the use of the error codes with written comments on how to improve the sentence.

4. Teachers should show interest in their students' ideas and writing progress and engage with the contents of the coursework by providing encouragement and personalised feedback. An example from the data is, "*short conclusion*" written by Sara, instead of a more helpful comment I would write:

*"Your essay responds clearly to the writing task, but in the conclusion, you need to state the significance of the topic and your opinion towards the topic".*

*"Good essay"*

5. Teachers should ensure the feedback is as clear and legible as possible, so that students can understand and benefit from it. This can be done by using words instead of merely symbols.
6. Teachers should strike a balance between giving specific feedback and making appropriate comments and suggestions on the students' written texts. For example, instead of only correcting language errors, the teacher should also give feedback on different writing issues (e.g., the students' ideas) to meet the textbook objectives.

Given what we know from the current study, keeping these principles in mind will help teachers to focus on the big picture of how and why they should provide written feedback on students' written coursework. I would argue that these principles would help to maximise the success of teachers' written feedback.

## 7.4 Research Contribution

This section presents the main contribution of this research to existing knowledge, particularly in relation to feedback on academic writing in the context of increasing number of university EFL courses. This is also related to the theoretical, practical and methodological contributions, which are presented separately.

By revealing the factors behind existing teachers' practices, and the challenges faced by students, the interpretive case study design of the current study has made significant contributions to the knowledge of teaching writing approaches in general and providing feedback in particular. Theoretically, the findings of the current study suggest that following the guidelines provided by the syllabus regarding the process of writing and giving feedback, along with professional training on how to use it, can contribute to enhancing teachers' knowledge, as well as their professionalism in the methodology of teaching writing and providing different types of feedback. Thus, the existence or absence of institutional guidelines influences teachers' feedback practices, especially when appropriate training is lacking. In other words, the practice of feedback in its multiple forms after training, affords teachers the opportunity to become their own developer of theory, learning and knowledge.

It is likely that training by teaching assistants or mentors to provide peer response as discussed in the recommendation section will contribute to the overall improvement of the teaching of writing and giving feedback in the TEFL/TESOL context. This will in turn enhance teacher development, students' successful peer response, and increase the quality of student-faculty interactions. These likely benefit, will be enhanced by the richness of the process-based approach which will give more control and autonomy to students as it involves them actively in the feedback process (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Involving the teaching assistant or mentor is also supported by sociocultural



theory as it will create socialisation by learning feedback first through social interaction (i.e., teaching assistant and mentor) and then through individual internalisation of social behaviours (i.e., by the practice of peer feedback).

The model used in analysing the students' written coursework (drawing upon Ferris, 1997 and Ellis, 2008) contributes to offering a more nuanced picture about the teachers' practices of written feedback and could be used by the teacher-as-researcher to analyse and evaluate their own written feedback which encourages teachers to reflect upon and enhance their practice. Moreover, the model of providing feedback and redrafting suggested in this study would help to enhance engagement between teachers and students. This model encourages teachers to be collaborators in revising curriculum, improving their work environment, professionalizing teaching, and developing educational policy. Such a model can suggest further implications for educators, policymakers and EFL teachers in Saudi universities to support learning in the academic writing classroom. It would also help other audiences in somewhat similar contexts to transfer this model of delivering different types of feedback to their own contexts and adapt it to meet the need of their educational context.

This study investigated an increasingly significant aspect of feedback practices in relation to students' written coursework as it fosters learning and creates classroom atmosphere that encourage learning in social and interaction. The literature review (Chapter 3) demonstrated that many studies tend to focus on feedback practices in the context of the second language. Furthermore, the studies conducted on feedback practices in an EFL context, in a Saudi context in particular (e.g., Alshahrani and Storch, 2014 and Rajab et al., 2016) reveal that little is currently known about the nature of feedback in this current context. This indicates that this study is a valuable contribution in the EFL Saudi context, including filling the current gap in the literature

by providing a better understanding of the current approach to feedback in EFL writing classes taking place in a Saudi educational institution, including the teachers' beliefs, preferences, attitudes, and practice. Moreover, it contributes to the interesting insights into how students interpret feedback and how it affects their feelings regarding the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, including feelings, emotions, attitudes, motivations and appreciation. Therefore, teachers in the field of EFL writing should be aware of how students experience feedback and should be trained to deal with it while giving feedback.

The review of previous studies in the context of both Saudi Arabian universities and similar EFL areas revealed an absence of qualitative research focusing on the issue of feedback on the written texts of English-major students. The constructivist design enabled multiple data sets and fine-grained analysis on the same context, thus providing insights into how the same event is experienced differently by different stakeholders in the process. As noted in the literature review, particularly in the Saudi context, experimental and quasi-experimental studies tend to ignore affective factors, (i.e., attitudes to the type of feedback provided, the feedback provider, and learners' goals). This study makes a qualitative contribution to a context, which is mostly filled with quantitative research conducted with the aim of generalisability. Hence, my study provides solid evidence on engagements between teachers and students through analysing students' written coursework which provided a fuller insight into the way teachers and students view and deal with different types of feedback. This is an important contribution especially when we know that previous literature on written feedback has mostly focused on the issue of effectiveness of written feedback.

Finally, while teaching English is considered the most important trend in the 2030 Saudi vision (Al Mukhallafi, 2019), this study contributes to this element in the

vision by emphasizing the significance of professional development and training for EFL teachers. The findings of this study provide significant recommendations for policy makers to review and enhance intensive or remedial English courses and programmes before students start standard English academic study.

## **7.5 Study Limitations and Future Research**

My suggestions on future work building on the findings of the current study are as follows:

First, it should be noted that the current study used multiple data collection methods which represent a case study, however, it is recognised that one of the limitations associated with the methods employed in my study is the lack of using observation as a data collection method which could allow more data on the quantity and quality of feedback in the classroom. Therefore, the use of observation would have allowed me to triangulate between the data sets. Moreover, it may be particularly fruitful to explore the extent of any differences in the students' response to feedback, identified in some cohorts of students, during the writing classroom.

One of the reasons that limit the use of the observation is due to the need to acquire access to the research setting (i.e., writing classroom). This can be a lengthy process as it depends on the students' consent as the number of students per classroom is more than 30 as data is to be collected from both teachers' and students' interactions, reactions to feedback and behaviours. Therefore, I would have had to commit far more time to obtain the students' consent. Nonetheless, I would argue that conducting a longitudinal study with classroom observations and interviews would be a strong component with interviews could have brought to the study very detailed and

more nuanced understanding of teachers' and students' perceptions and practice that can explain the phenomenon of feedback in the writing classroom.

Second, as the current context applies written feedback on a single draft, there is a need for additional studies to be carried out in different EFL university contexts which apply multiple drafts and with learners at different proficiency levels. These studies should explore the process of feedback on multiple drafts with other different genres such as argumentative essays.

Third, it would be beneficial to undertake a further investigation of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding feedback in different institutions in Saudi Arabia by conducting a longitudinal study over a year of giving feedback on a bachelor's English course. Suitable research designs to investigate this could include featuring classroom observation in order to explore the peer feedback and analyses of student texts as well as the accompanying teacher written feedback, in order to find out how teachers and students engaged in the process of feedback during the writing lesson.

Fourth, it would be beneficial for further qualitative studies to design and evaluate a pedagogical model following the action research design, following the model proposed earlier in this chapter (see Figure [Figure 7-1](#)) to be conducted by a researcher who is also an EFL writing expert, in order to enable the findings to be viewed and interpreted from a researcher-teacher lens.

Fifth, the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic has increased the transfer from face-to-face to virtual learning, resulting in further developments of online learning platforms. It has also proved a lesson to humanity on how to accept changes, including the ability to adjust daily routines. This development has led to students' essays being submitted, and receiving feedback, online. I therefore consider that it is

now essential to examine and explore the process of computer-mediated feedback, including any necessary improvements. This would help EFL teachers to apply enhanced feedback when a need arises to transfer to online learning.

Finally, it would be beneficial to evaluate teachers' engagement with seeking Self-directed Professional Development (SDPD) in relation to providing feedback for their students' writing. It should be noted that this was not an area I explored in the data generation phase when working with teachers, and was an issue that arose during the process of my research. This limitation meant that I was only able to speculate about the impact of teachers' lack of training in relation to the practices of feedback in this context. In addition, this aspect has, to the best of my knowledge, not been previously explored in the empirical literature. While there is evidence that a lack of institutional continuous professional development has an impact on teachers' feedback practices (Lee, 2008a), little is known about teachers' engagement with self-directed professional development in relation to giving feedback. This was recently highlighted by Alzahrani (2019), who explored the nature of SDPD amongst EFL lecturers in the Saudi TESOL university context, arguing for its effectiveness as an approach to maximising EFL teachers' professional development. In light of the issues discussed in my study, I feel there is a need for further exploration of the processes by which EFL teachers make sense of their SDPD in relation to responding to students' writing. I consider that this would provide a number of insights to assist institutions to encourage and recognise this form of professional development, particularly when, as it is evident in the context of this study, many institutions are currently failing to provide these opportunities for their staff.

Despite the fact that the study design of this current research led to a lack of generalisability, I would argue that the findings provide useful information that

contributes to the understanding of EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of the use of feedback in relation to written work. I also believe that this study provides useful insights into the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding feedback in a particular context, as well as highlighting the challenges faced by EFL students in dealing with such feedback. This study also contributes theoretically, contextually and methodologically to this area, as well as to the field of feedback in relation to writing. Thus, despite the limitations of this study, it has identified a number of beneficial implications and recommendations to be taken into consideration by teachers of writing and researchers, as well as stakeholders of Prince University in Saudi Arabia.

## 7.6 Reflection on my PhD Journey

Regarding the reflection of my PhD journey, I was fortunate to have joined a programme provided by the University of Exeter which is the Master of Social Science which introduced me to educational research. At the beginning of this programme, I found it difficult to understand the content of the modules and what was expected of me as a PhD student. I started searching and reading about the philosophy behind educational research in terms of the different paradigms, the philosophical assumptions of each paradigm and debates, as well as how to carry out empirical research. In addition, without my supervisors' recommendations and continuous support, I would not have had that level of confidence and knowledge. Consequently, I was able to participate and be involved with full confidence in theoretical discussions with PhD colleagues and in academic seminars. This successful start motivated and prepared me for the real mission with my thesis.

Personally, conducting research enhanced my problem-solving skills and my ability to interpret people's experience and provided me with answers to practical educational issues. I also acquired valuable life skills such as professionalism, time management and learning how to use online research tools. Learning about educational research improved my awareness of teaching and learning methods strategically and effectively. It gave me a knowledge that I hope to apply in practical situations. Conducting research has given me the belief that I can find answers to things that are unknown, fill gaps in knowledge and contribute to the way that professionals work. From this journey, I also learnt that educational research is all about how to look to a single issue through a new and different lens.

Finally, throughout this research journey, the valuable results I gained from this research provided me with detailed insights into the importance of teaching writing and giving feedback to English language major students and how much I can help in improving it so as to grow professionally when I work as a writing teacher. Furthermore, being a researcher who is likely to be in an administrative position, I am planning to enhance my role once I am back in my home country by implementing a number of initiatives for promoting teaching writing including feedback on writing in my context, such as organizing presentations and workshops to share knowledge with colleagues about its importance and effectiveness, and hope that my initiatives will inspire other teachers to improve the teaching of writing.



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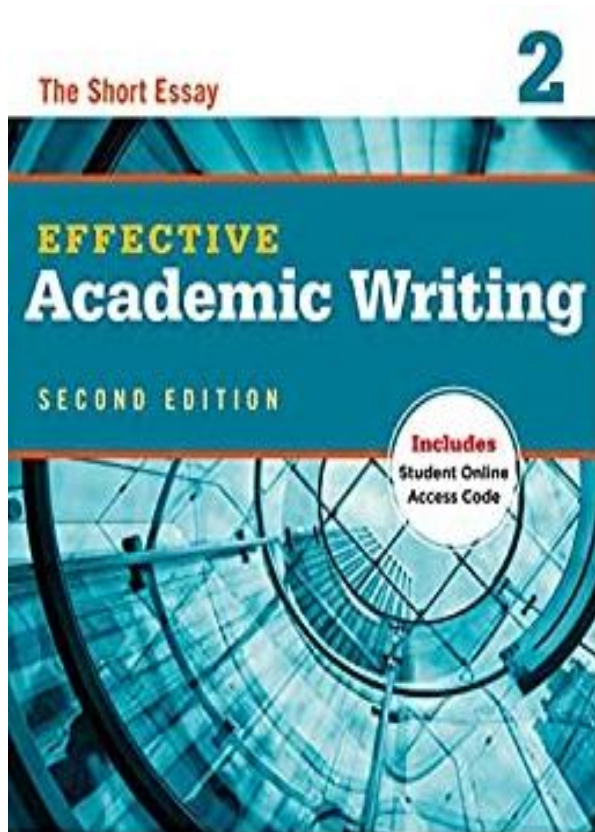
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# APPENDICES

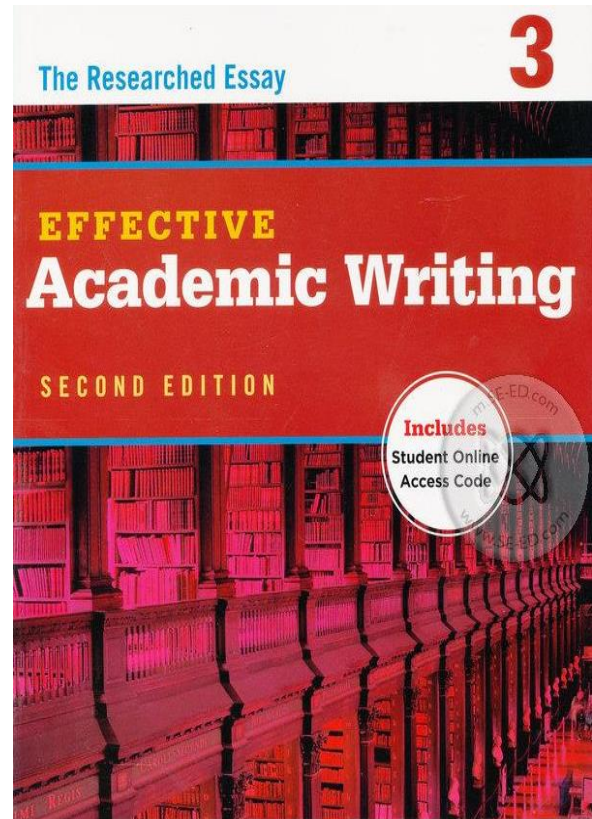
## Appendix 1

Textbooks of years three and four



Alice Savage  
Patricia Mayer

OXFORD



Rhonda Liss  
Jason Davis

OXFORD

## Contents of the textbook- year three



### Contents

Unit	Academic Focus	Rhetorical Focus	Language and Grammar Focus
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Paragraph to Short Essay</b></p> <p>page 1</p>	<p><b>Writing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paragraph structure</li> <li>• The topic sentence</li> <li>• Unity and coherence</li> <li>• The paragraph and short essay</li> <li>• Short essay organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple and compound sentences</li> <li>• Run-on sentences</li> <li>• Dependent clauses</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Descriptive Essays</b></p> <p>page 27</p>	<p><b>Culinary Arts and Nutrition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepositional phrases in descriptive writing</li> <li>• Details in sentences</li> <li>• Similes and simile structure</li> <li>• Adjectives in descriptive writing</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Narrative Essays</b></p> <p>page 53</p>	<p><b>Psychology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sequence in narrative essays</li> <li>• Subordinating conjunctions</li> <li>• Details in essays</li> <li>• The past continuous in narrative essays</li> <li>• Past time clauses</li> <li>• Simultaneous activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Comparison-Contrast Essays</b></p> <p>page 79</p>	<p><b>Travel and Tourism</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison-contrast organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison and contrast connectors</li> <li>• Comparatives in comparison-contrast essays</li> <li>• Comparatives in sentences</li> </ul>





Unit	Academic Focus	Rhetorical Focus	Language and Grammar Focus
<b>5</b> <b>Opinion Essays</b> page 103	<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion organization</li> <li>• Facts and opinions</li> <li>• Counter-argument and refutation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantity expressions in opinion essays</li> <li>• Connectors to show support and opposition</li> </ul>
<b>6</b> <b>Cause-and-Effect Essays</b> page 129	<b>Education and Economics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause-and-effect organization</li> <li>• Clustering information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phrasal verbs</li> <li>• The future with will</li> <li>• <i>Will</i> with <i>so that</i></li> <li>• Future possibilities with <i>if</i> clauses</li> </ul>

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix I:</b> The Writing Process .....	160
<b>Appendix II:</b> Punctuation .....	161
<b>Appendix III:</b> Connectors .....	163
<b>Appendix IV:</b> Glossary .....	165
<b>Appendix V:</b> Correlation to <i>Grammar Sense 2</i> .....	168

## Contents of the textbook- year four

# Contents

Unit	Academic Focus	Critical Thinking and Research Focus	Rhetorical Focus	Language and Grammar Focus
<b>1</b> The Researched Essay page 1	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding assignments</li> <li>Words used to signal rhetorical modes</li> </ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting information from primary and secondary sources</li> <li>Guidelines for researching a topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure of the researched essay</li> <li>Selecting and narrowing a topic</li> <li>Unity and coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main and dependent clauses</li> <li>Run-on sentences</li> <li>Sentence fragments</li> <li>Verb tense consistency</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Comparison-Contrast Essays page 35	<b>Art Appreciation</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison and contrast signal words</li> </ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using search engines</li> <li>Evaluating reliability of sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison-contrast organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepositional phrases</li> <li>Restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Cause-and-Effect Essays page 71	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cause-and-effect signal words</li> </ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quoting from a source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cause-and-effect organization</li> <li>Relating effects to causes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collocations with cause-and-effect signal words</li> <li>Sentence connectors showing cause and effect</li> <li>Real and unreal conditionals</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Argumentative Essays page 105	<b>Law and Ethics</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signal words used in argumentative essay assignments</li> </ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarizing sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argumentative organization</li> <li>Counter-arguments, concessions, and refutations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collocations associated with argumentative vocabulary</li> <li>Connectors showing addition and contrast</li> <li>Adverbial clauses</li> <li>Noun clauses</li> </ul>



Unit	Academic Focus	Critical Thinking and Research Focus	Rhetorical Focus	Language and Grammar Focus
<b>5</b> Classification Essays page 141	<b>Career Planning</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading and analyzing bar graphs</li></ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paraphrasing a bar graph</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Classification organization</li><li>• Establishing order of importance, degree, and size</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gerunds and infinitives</li><li>• Verbs following <i>make, let, and have</i></li></ul>
<b>6</b> Reaction Essays page 177	<b>Literary Analysis</b>	<b>Critical Thinking Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theme in short stories</li></ul> <b>Research Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works cited list</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reaction organization</li><li>• The literary present</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passives</li></ul>

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix I:</b>	The Writing Process for Research Papers .....	212
<b>Appendix II:</b>	Citing Sources .....	218
<b>Appendix III:</b>	Advanced Punctuation Issues .....	222
<b>Appendix IV:</b>	Gerunds and Infinitives .....	224
<b>Appendix V:</b>	Glossary .....	225
<b>Appendix VI:</b>	Correlation to <i>Grammar Sense 3</i> .....	230



## Appendix 2

### Students' interviews schedule (English and Arabic version)

<b>Interview Questions for Students Before Receiving Feedback.</b>	
The value of feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of feedback on writing?</li> <li>• Do you think feedback is a helpful way to improve your writing?</li> </ul>
The process of feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How usually do you receive feedback?</li> <li>• How many drafts do you submit to peer or/and teacher?</li> <li>• Can you explain the process of submitting the draft and receiving the feedback?</li> </ul>
Preferences and attitudes towards the different feedback types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who would you like to give you feedback on your written essay?</li> <li>• What do you think about the peer feedback?</li> <li>• What do you think about the teacher-students oral feedback?</li> </ul>
The ways they like their written feedback to be (students' requirement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you like your teacher to correct your errors, to correct all errors or just select some of them?</li> <li>• How would you like your teacher to correct your errors, direct or indirect?</li> </ul>
The focus of feedback on their written texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of errors do you like your teacher to correct?</li> <li>• What do you think your teacher will focus on when giving feedback?</li> </ul>
<b>Interview Questions for Students After Receiving Feedback.</b>	
Students' reaction to the feedback written on their essays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long does it take your teacher to return your essay with feedback?</li> <li>• Have you replied to your teachers' feedback?</li> <li>• Do you ask your teacher about any feedback you received?</li> <li>• Have you made any changes in this draft after teacher feedback?</li> <li>• Have you ignored any comment? Why?</li> </ul>
Students' understanding of teachers' written comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know why the teacher has written this comment?</li> <li>• What do you think the teacher means by underlining these words (after I point out an example on her written texts)?</li> </ul>

Preference and attitude of feedback types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of written feedback do you think is more helpful for your essay? and why?</li> <li>• Can you explain your attitude towards the types of feedback you usually received?</li> <li>• Can you explain your attitude towards the focus of feedback you usually received?</li> <li>• Do you think peer feedback will help you in understating your teacher' written feedback? Why?</li> <li>• Do you think oral feedback will help you in understating your teacher' written feedback? Why?</li> </ul>
Difficulties of understating teachers' feedback?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you experienced any difficulties with teachers' written feedback?</li> <li>• Have you experienced any difficulties with teachers' oral feedback?</li> </ul>
Strategies to deal with difficulties in understanding teachers' feedback?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you do when you experienced any difficulties?</li> <li>• Have you tried to correct the errors?</li> <li>• Have you asked your teacher?</li> <li>• Have you asked your peer?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

أسئلة المقابلة للطلاب قبل تلقي الملاحظات.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ما رأيك في التغذية الراجعة على الكتابة؟</li> <li>• هل تعتقد أن التغذية الراجعة طريقة مفيدة لتحسين كتابتك؟</li> </ul>	قيمة التغذية الراجعة.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• كيف عادة تتلقى ردود الفعل؟</li> <li>• كم عدد المسودات التي ترسلها إلى زميله أو / والمعلمه؟</li> <li>• هل يمكنك شرح عملية تقديم المسودة وتلقي الملاحظات؟</li> </ul>	عملية التغذية الراجعة.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• من الذي ترغب في إعطائك ملاحظات على مقالاتك المكتوبة؟</li> <li>• ما رأيك في ملاحظات الزملاء؟</li> <li>• ما رأيك في التغذية الراجعة الشفوية للمعلم والطلاب؟</li> </ul>	النفسيات والآراء تجاه أنواع التغذية الراجعة المختلفة.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• كيف تحب أن يصحح معلمك أخطائك أو يصحح كل الأخطاء أو يختار بعضها فقط؟</li> <li>• كيف تريد أن يصحح معلمك أخطائك ، المباشرة أو غير المباشرة؟</li> </ul>	كيف يحبون أن تكون ملاحظاتهم المكتوبة (متطلبات الطالبات).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ما هي أنواع الأخطاء التي ترغبين في أن تصححها معلمتك؟</li> <li>• ما الذي تعتقدين أن معلمتك ستيركز عليه عند تقديم التغذية الراجعة؟</li> </ul>	التركيز على الملاحظات على نصوصهم المكتوبة.
أسئلة المقابلة للطلاب بعد تلقي الملاحظات.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ما هو الوقت الذي تستغرقه معلمتك لإعادة مقالاتك مع التعليقات؟</li> <li>• هل قمتي بالرد على ملاحظات معلمتك؟</li> </ul>	رد فعل الطالبات على التعليقات المكتوبة على مقالاتهم.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• هل تسألين معلمتك عن أي ملاحظات تلقيتها؟</li> <li>• هل أجرتي أي تغييرات في هذه المسودة بعد ملاحظات المعلمة؟</li> <li>• هل تجاهلتي أي تعليق؟ لماذا؟</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• هل تعرف لماذا كتبت المعلمة هذا التعليق؟</li> <li>• ماذا تقصد المعلمة برأيك بوضع خط تحت هذه الكلمات (بعد أن أشرت إلى مثال على نصوصها المكتوبة)؟</li> </ul>	فهم الطالبات لتعليقات المعلمين المكتوبة.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ما نوع التعليقات المكتوبة التي تعتقد أنها أكثر فائدة لمقالك؟ ولماذا؟</li> <li>• هل يمكنك شرح موقفك تجاه أنواع الملاحظات التي تتلقاها عادة؟</li> <li>• هل يمكنك شرح موقفك تجاه تركيز الملاحظات التي تتلقاها عادة؟</li> <li>• هل تعتقد أن ملاحظات الزملاء ستساعدك في فهم الملاحظات المكتوبة من خلال معلمتك؟ لماذا؟</li> <li>• هل تعتقد أن التعليقات الشفوية ستساعدك في فهم الملاحظات المكتوبة من خلال معلمتك؟ لماذا؟</li> </ul>	أنواع التغذية الراجعة المكتوبة من المعلمة.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• هل واجهت أي صعوبات تتعلق بتعليقات المعلمين الكتابية؟</li> <li>• هل واجهت أي صعوبات في التعليقات الشفوية للمعلمين؟</li> </ul>	صعوبات في فهم ملاحظات المعلمات.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ماذا فعلت عندما واجهت صعوبات؟</li> <li>• هل حاولت تصحيح الأخطاء؟</li> <li>• هل سألت معلمتك؟</li> <li>• هل سألت زميلتك؟</li> </ul>	استراتيجيات للتعامل مع الصعوبات في فهم ملاحظات المعلمة؟

## Appendix 3

### Teachers' interviews schedule (English and Arabic version)

Number	Focus of Questions	Main Questions
1-	Teacher background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me what degree do you have and in which major?</li> <li>• What modules have you taught and for how long have you taught writing?</li> </ul>
2-	Institutional focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What material do you use for teaching writing?</li> <li>• How many classes do you teach, and what number of students in each class?</li> <li>• Does the English department provide any training courses for writing teaching or giving feedback?</li> </ul>
3-	Teaching writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me how do you start your writing lessons?</li> <li>• Do you use a specific strategy or approaches in teaching?</li> <li>• What do you think the main challenges students in your classes face when producing writing?</li> </ul>
4-	Giving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent do you think giving feedback helps students to improve their writing?</li> <li>• What type of feedback do you prefer to use (written, peer feedback, conferencing)?</li> <li>• What aspect of writing do you focus on when giving feedback? Why do you think this aspect is essential?</li> <li>• What is the process of submitting the homework? Is there a redrafting? And why?</li> <li>• What do you expect from students when you provide them with feedback?</li> <li>• How do you discuss the feedback with your students?</li> <li>• Did you explain codes and marks for students?</li> </ul>
5-	Beliefs about students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think students have difficulties in understanding some types of your written feedback?</li> <li>• Do students usually do what you expect, or do they ignore your feedback?</li> </ul>
6-	Writing assessment criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you explain how the writing assessment takes place and what type of assessment students receive?</li> <li>• Can you explain the criteria of scoring writing?</li> </ul>

رقم السؤال	تركيز الأسئلة	الأسئلة الرئيسية
1-	خلفية المعلم	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>هل يمكنك تحديد الدرجة العلمية التي حصلت عليها وفي أي تخصص؟</li> <li>ما هي الوحدات التي كنت صعبًا فيها وإلى متى تدرس الكتابة؟</li> </ul>
2-	التركيز المؤسسي	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ما هي المواد التي تستخدمها لتدريس الكتابة؟</li> <li>كم عدد الفصول التي تدرسها وما عدد الطلاب في كل فصل؟</li> <li>هل يقدم قسم اللغة الإنجليزية أي دورات تدريبية لكتابة التدريس أو إبداء الرأي؟</li> </ul>
3-	تدريس الكتابة	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>هل يمكن أن تخبرني كيف تبدأ دروس الكتابة؟</li> <li>هل تستخدم استراتيجيات أو مناهج محددة في التدريس؟</li> <li>ما رأيك في التحديات الرئيسية التي يواجهها الطلاب في فصولك عند إنتاج الكتابة؟</li> </ul>
4-	إعطاء التغذية الراجعة	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن تقديم التغذية الراجعة يساعد الطلاب على تحسين كتاباتهم؟</li> <li>ما نوع التعليقات التي تفضل استخدامها (مكتوبة ، ملاحظات الزملاء ، الشفهية)؟</li> <li>ما هو الجانب الكتابي الذي تركز عليه عند تقديم الملاحظات؟ لماذا تعتقد أن هذا الجانب مهم؟</li> <li>ما هي عملية تقديم الواجب ؟ هل هناك إعادة صياغة؟ و لماذا؟</li> <li>ماذا تتوقع من الطلاب عندما تزودهم بملاحظات؟</li> <li>كيف تناقش التعليقات مع طالباتك؟</li> <li>هل قمتي بشرح الرموز والعلامات للطلاب؟</li> </ul>
5-	معتقدات عن الطلاب	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>هل تعتقد أن الطالبات يواجهون صعوبات في فهم بعض أنواع ملاحظاتك المكتوبة؟</li> <li>هل تقوم الطالبات عادة بما تتوقعه ، أم أنهم يتجاهلون ملاحظاتك؟</li> </ul>
6-	معايير تقييم الكتابة	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>هل يمكنك شرح كيفية إجراء التقييم الكتابي ونوع التقييم الذي يتلقاه الطلاب؟</li> <li>هل يمكنك شرح معايير كتابة الدرجات؟</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4

### Students profile sheet

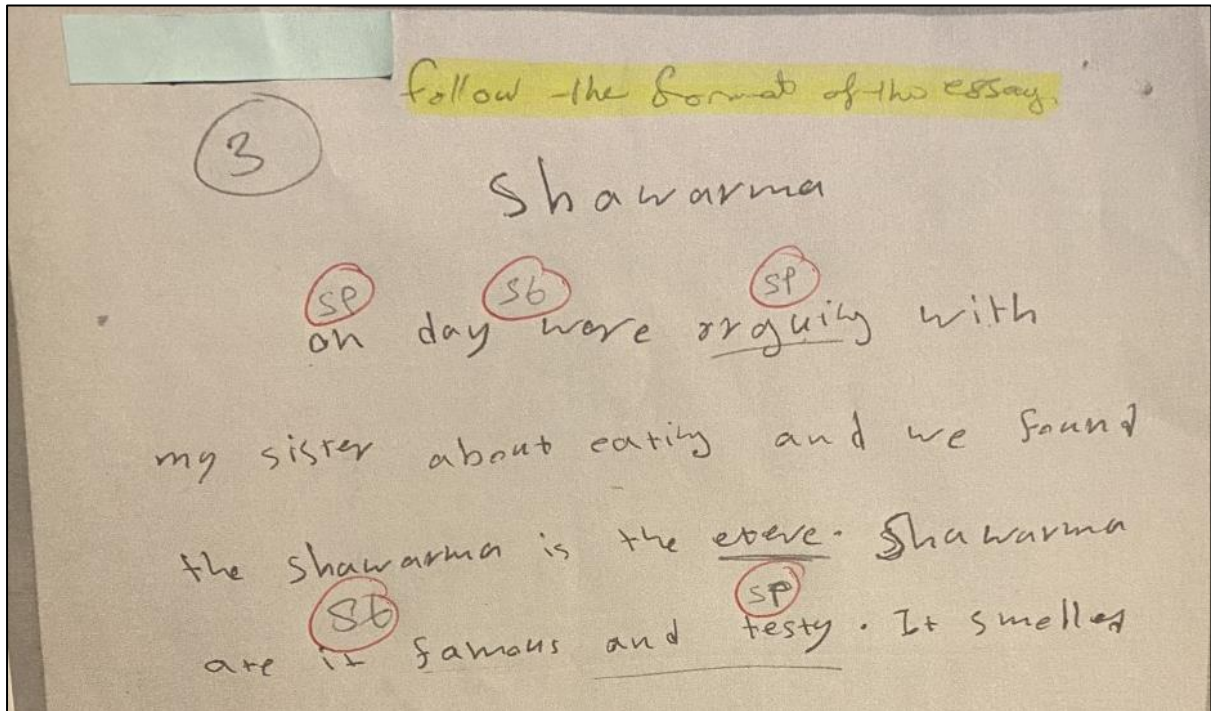
Name			
Date and time	Number of interviews	Number of the submitted essay	Notes

### Task completion sheet

Task	Date and time	Notes
Communicate with the Department of English Language.		
Send the information sheet.		
Send the consent form.		
Interview with students.		
Interview with teachers.		

## Appendix 5


### Sample of coding text





## Appendix 6

### Ethical form

		<i>Ref (for office use only)</i> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">D1819-034</div>
<b>COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES</b>		
<p>When completing this form please remember that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the ethical considerations of the research being undertaken. As a generic form it has been constructed to cover a wide-range of different projects so some sections may not seem relevant to you. Please include the information which addresses any ethical considerations for your particular project which will be needed by the SSIS Ethics Committee to approve your proposal. In completing this form please make full use of the guidance and resources available at <a href="http://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/ethics/">http://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/ethics/</a></p>		
<p>All staff and students within SSIS should use this form to apply for ethical approval and then send it to one of the following email addresses:</p>		
<p><a href="mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk">ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk</a> This email should be used by staff and students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy &amp; Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.</p>		
<p><a href="mailto:ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk">ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk</a> This email should be used by staff and students in the Graduate School of Education.</p>		
<b>Applicant details</b>		
<b>Name</b>	Sahar Alamri	
<b>Department</b>	Education	
<b>UoE email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Sa522@exeter.ac.uk">Sa522@exeter.ac.uk</a>	
<b>Duration for which permission is required</b>		
<p>You should request approval for the entire period of your research activity. <u>The start date should be at least one month from the date that you submit this form.</u> Students should use the anticipated date of completion of their course as the end date of their work. Please note that <u>retrospective ethical approval will never be given.</u></p>		
<b>Start date:</b> 01/03/2019	<b>End date:</b> 31/12/2019	<b>Date submitted:</b> 12/02/2019
<b>Students only</b>		
<p>All students must discuss their research intentions with their supervisor/tutor prior to submitting an application for ethical approval. The discussion may be face to face or via email.</p>		
<p>Prior to submitting your application in its final form to the SSIS Ethics Committee it should be approved by your first and second supervisor / dissertation supervisor/tutor. You should submit evidence of their approval with your application, e.g. a copy of their email approval.</p>		
<b>Student number</b>	650052148	
<b>Programme of study</b>	<b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)</b> PHD Education 4 year	
<b>Name of Supervisor(s)/tutors or Dissertation Tutor</b>	<b>Dr. Hania Salter-Dvorak</b> <b>Dr. Susan Riley</b>	
<b>Have you attended any ethics training that is available to students?</b>	Yes, I have taken part in ethics training at the University of Exeter I have attended a session about ethics, which was hold by Exeter university. I learnt, during this session, several aspects related to ethics. I was also provided with some external online resources for further	
<p>\\isad.isadroot.ex.ac.uk\uo\Colleges\CSSIS\Research\23. Ethics\ETHICS (NS GSE)\SCANNED APPROVAL FORMS 2018-19\PhD\D1819-034 Alamri\D1819-034 Alamri approved app.docx</p>		
Page 1 of 20		



reading, which I visited to enrich my knowledge and prevent doing any issues. I have also read a variety of reliable sources online, that I found myself, to ensure that none of the most repeated ethical issues in research take place on my data collection stage.

#### **Certification for all submissions**

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given in this application and that I undertake in my research to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research. I confirm that if my research plans change I will contact the Committee before research takes place and submit a request for amendment or, if necessary, complete a further ethics proposal form. I confirm that any that document translations have been done by a competent person with no significant changes to the original meaning.

**Sahar Hassan Alamri**

Double click this box to confirm certification

*Submission of this ethics proposal form confirms your acceptance of the above.*

#### **TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT**

A Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context

#### **ETHICAL REVIEW BY AN EXTERNAL COMMITTEE**

No, my research is not funded by, or doesn't use data from, either the NHS or Ministry of Defence.

#### **MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005**

No, my project does not involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with learning disabilities)

#### **SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

*Maximum of 750 words.*

This research is entitled "A case study of teachers' feedback on EFL academic writing, in the Saudi University context". Teachers' feedback is a key element of students' writing development. The rationale for this study to be conducted in a Saudi University context is that many educators complain about English major students' academic writing challenges and teachers' feedback (Al-Mansour, 2015). According to IELTS (2018), average writing scores for Saudi academic IELTS takers is the lowest among their other skills (reading, listening and speaking). This was released in 2017, as it is the last updated statistics reported by IELTS. In addition, Alsowat (2017) states that Saudi university students including those who study English as a major experience some challenges in their academic writing skill. In several studies (e.g., Al Badi, 2015; Mudawy & Mousa, 2017) those challenges reported to be emerged from causes, which are categorised into mother tongue interference, students' linguistic and general literacy background, coherence and cohesion, expressing ideas, and paraphrasing. However, teachers' feedback has not been researched, so due to its importance, it is to be investigated in my study. The aim of this study is to investigate the process of providing feedback on academic writing, students' experience towards receiving feedback, and to explore teachers' knowledge and beliefs about feedback.

In this research, I aim to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is the process of giving feedback in English language academic writing?
- 2- What is students' experience of teachers' feedback on their academic writing?
- 3- What is the teachers' understanding of giving feedback?

Context of my study:

The context is a bachelor degree (BA) programme in a Saudi university in which academic writing is taught (English Language department). Participants in this study are to be:

- 1- Undergraduate females studying BA in English language in the third and fourth levels.
- 2- English language teachers, who are currently teaching academic writing to the chosen students

#### **INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH**

My research will be conducted at a Saudi university, which is located in central Saudi Arabia. My research will meet the requirements of the context of my study by providing the consent form and the information sheet, to be sent to the participants (consent form and information sheet are presented at the end of this form- both the English and Arabic versions).

The interviews will be in Arabic language (mother tongue of both researcher and participants). I will be the only person who will conduct the interviews and collect students' writing samples.

The following sections require an assessment of possible ethical consideration in your research project. If particular sections do not seem relevant to your project please indicate this and clarify why.

#### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research employs a case study approach, where the data sets are to be collected as follows:

- 1-** Semi-structured interviews with 8 students who are currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of their degree (four students from each year).

Interviews will be conducted once before students receive the first feedback, and then after receiving each feedback on their assignments (three-four times). Each interview will take no more than 30 minutes. Interviews will be in Arabic, audio recorded and transcribed. Using this method will enable me to compare the participants' responses not only because I would use the pre-determined questions, but also because they will be followed with some follow-up questions to help me understand participants' answer deeply and in greater detail. The interviews will be conducted by artefact in that they will revolve around the participants' written texts and explore how teachers' feedback on these facilitates development of writing over time.

- 2-** Students' written texts.

Students will be asked to provide me with their academic writing assignments including the teacher's feedback. Hyland (2015) considers such text data as the major source of data for researching writing. Therefore, students' written texts will be obtained in my study in order to observe students' writing developments before and after teachers' feedback during the period of data collection (9 weeks).

- 3-** Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with two teachers who are currently teaching the 8 chosen students.

Interviews are to be conducted individually at teachers' convenient location and time. Each interview will take no more than 40 minutes. Each interview will be in Arabic, audio recorded, and transcribed.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

- 1- Participants are English language major students, who are currently studying their bachelor's degree in English Language in the third and fourth years. Students will be invited to participate, as in the following process:
  - a. An email written in Arabic will be sent to 18 English major students (nine students from year 3 and 4) via their English teachers, inviting them to participate in this study. The email should include the information sheet provided below.
  - b. Eight students from among the volunteers will be chosen as follows with the help of their teachers:
    - Four students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year: one good student, one average student, and two low-level students.
    - Four students from the 4<sup>th</sup> year: one good student, one average student, and two low-level students.
- 2- Two English writing teachers (one teacher from each year), who are currently working at the English language department at the University and teaching the students described above will be invited individually to an interview in order to gain their perspectives, and information that might be difficult to gain from students such as assessment criteria.

## **THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION**

All participants will be informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw or not include their views at any stage of the research. Participants in the study will participate in the research freely.

➤ Interviews with Students (participants):

Students will be invited to be interviewed, through an email which includes the information sheet below. When invitation is accepted, they will then be provided with a written consent form to sign.

➤ Students' Academic writing assignments:

The student research participants will be required to provide me with their academic writing assignments. These academic writing assignments will be collected after receiving permission from the English language department and after students have signed the consent form.

➤ Interviews with Teachers (participants):

Teachers will be invited to be interviewed, through an email which includes the information sheet below. When invitation is accepted, the teachers will then be provided with a written consent form to sign

## **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

The schedule for the interviews will be arranged based on both the teachers' and students' availability.

The students will be asked to bring their writing assignments with them to the interview to be discussed.

## **THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION**

1. Two different information sheets (one for teachers and the other for students) will be translated into Arabic and will be sent to all participants. The information sheet will explain the nature and purposes of the study. It will also provide participants with information about the research and the voluntary aspect of their participation.

2. The informed consent will be obtained in writing to promise participants anonymity and confidentiality and to assure them that their participation is voluntary and that their right to withdraw at any stage of the study is guaranteed.

**ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM**

There is no perceived harm to participants in my study I will assure them of anonymity and confidentiality and give them the freedom to choose the place and time of conducting the interview.

**DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE**

Participants will be informed that :

All data will be anonymized by keeping their personal identity information on a separate word file. All data files, transcripts, and notes will be stored anonymously.

1. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the anonymity of the students
2. All data, which will be collected from participants, including their audio recordings from the interviews and scanned written assignments will be stored in a very secure place which is, my University OneDrive to keep data confidential.

The following Data protection notice will be translated into Arabic and then told to each participant:

“Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.”

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

My study does not involve any commercial or other interests. It aims to investigate the role of feedback on students' academic writing and explore teachers' understanding and knowledge towards providing feedback on students' writing. Participants will be informed that data will only be used for research purposes.

**USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK**

I will ask the participants whether they are interested in reading the findings; those who are will receive a copy.

## Appendix 7

### Information sheet for students (English and Arabic version)

#### INFORMATION SHEET



#### Information sheet for students

**Title of Project:** A Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context.

**Researcher name:** Sahar Alamri

#### Invitation and brief summary:

I am a student at Exeter University, England, doing a PhD degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I am currently working on my final project thesis entitled "a Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context", supervised by Dr Hania Salter-Dvorak and Dr Susan Riley. I am inviting you to take part in this research. Before giving your consent to participate, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take time to consider the information carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

#### Purpose of the research:

There is an increasing focus on the topic of teacher feedback as a key element of students' writing development. This study aims to investigate the processes related to feedback given by English Language teachers on Academic writing and your experience of teachers' feedback on your academic writing.

#### Why have I been approached?

In this study, you are approached because you are an English language major student. If you are to participate in this study, this would enable me, as the researcher, to gain information about the process of receiving feedback from your academic writing tutor.

#### What would taking part involve?

You will be asked to take part in 4 or 5 interviews. One interview will be conducted once before you receive the first feedback, and then after receiving each feedback on your assignments (three-four times). Interviews will take place at a time and place which is convenient for you.

Each interview will take no more than 30 minutes. Interviews will be in Arabic, audio recorded for research and analysis purposes. Data gathered will be confidential and will not be shared with any party. Additionally, individual personal information such as names will not be shared.

In each interview you are required to present your written assignment after you obtained your teachers' feedback.

#### What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Conducting this study with the help of your participation will help to study the process of feedback, which may lead to exploring new findings that may support educators and educational researches to be informed with any teaching practices, learning, motivation, and human knowledge developments this study may report. Your participation may also help teachers effectively educate their students, and enhance their teaching methods and principals.

#### What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I do not believe that taking part in the research has any foreseeable risks. However, be informed that you have all the rights to not answer any questions during interviews that you may feel uncomfortable with.



**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can stop taking part at any time without having to give a reason and you can ask to withdraw any time and your data will be destroyed.

**How will my information be kept confidential?**

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing [dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk) or at [www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection)

"Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form." The only data that is to be requested from you are your email address (for further communications, any other means of communications is accepted as well), your interview answers, and your writing assignments. Such data will be collected in person. Your data will then be transferred, for storage purposes only, into a very secure external hard-disk, that no one apart from the researcher has access to. Your data will only be kept for the duration of this study. Note that your name will not be included anywhere with the data.

**Will I receive any payment for taking part?**

No, your participation is entirely on voluntary basis.

**What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results of the study are primarily for the purpose of writing my doctoral thesis. In addition, I am planning to disseminate the results in an academic publications. If you are interested in reading the outcomes of my findings at the end of the study please do email me, so I can share them with you and let you know where and how you can access them.

**Who is organising and funding this study?**

The study is organised by the researcher (Sahar Alamri), supervised by

- 1- Dr Salter-Dvorak, Hania (Lecturer in TESOL, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter)  
[h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)
- 2- Dr Susan Riley (Lecturer in TESOL, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter)  
[S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk)

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number....)

**Further information and contact details**

You can contact the research team for further information and/or to take part.

Sahar H. Alamri.  
sa522@exeter.ac.uk  
+44 (0) 7477141514  
+966 532010342

Or  
Supervisor's name. Dr. Hania Salter-Dvorak  
Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

Email: [h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)

If you are not happy with any aspect of the project and wish to complain – please contact:  
The department Ethics Officer or Ethics Committee Chair.

[dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk)

Or

Gail Seymour, Research Ethics and Governance Manager

[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk)

01392 726621

Thank you for your interest in this project

## Information sheet for teachers (English version)

S



### Information sheet for teachers

**Title of Project:** A Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context.

**Researcher name:** Sahar Alamri

#### Invitation and brief summary:

I am a student at Exeter University, England, doing a PhD degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I am currently working on my final project thesis entitled "a Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context", supervised by Dr Hania Salter-Dvorak and Dr Susan Riley. I am inviting you to take part in this research. Before giving your consent to participate, it is important that you understand the nature of your participation. Please take time to consider the information carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

#### Purpose of the research:

There is an increasing focus on the topic of teacher feedback as a key element of students' writing development. Since the 1970s, the focus of developing L2 writing has shifted from the product to the process and the effectiveness of feedback in this process has become an important issue to study.

This research aims to explore three main objectives which are; first, how feedback affects students' academic writing; Second, how students engage in the feedback process as a way of learning and improving their academic writing; and third, to understand teachers' perspective on feedback and how their understanding influences the type and quality of feedback they provide.

#### Why have I been approached?

In this study, you have been approached because you are an English language academic writing teacher. If you are to participate in this study, this would enable me, as the researcher, to gain information about the process of providing feedback to your students' academic writing, and to understand teachers' knowledge and beliefs towards the feedback.

#### What would taking part involve?

You will be asked to take part in one interview about feedback and teaching academic writing in English. The interview will be individual and take place at a time and place which is convenient for you. The interview will take 40-50 minutes and will be in Arabic, audio recorded for research and analysis purposes.

All data gathered will be confidential and will not be shared with any party. Additionally, individual personal information such as names will not be shared.



**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Conducting this study with the help of your participation will help me to study the process of feedback in English academic writing, which may lead to new understandings that may support educators and inform teaching practices.

Your participation may also help teachers effectively educate their students, and enhance their teaching knowledge and principles.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

I do not believe that taking part in the research has any foreseeable risks. However, be informed that you have the right to not answer any questions during interviews that you may feel uncomfortable with.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can stop taking part at any time without having to give a reason and you can ask to withdraw any time and your data will be destroyed.

**How will my information be kept confidential?**

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing [dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk) or at [www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection)

"Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form." The only data that is to be requested from you are your email address (for further communications, any other means of communications is accepted as well) and your interviews answers. Such data will be collected in person. Your data will then be transferred, for storage purposes only, into a secured external hard-disk, that no one apart from the research has access to. Your data will only be kept for the duration of this study. Note that your name will not be included anywhere with the data.

**Will I receive any payment for taking part?**

No, your participation is entirely on voluntary basis.

**What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results of the study are primarily for the purpose of writing my doctoral thesis. In addition, I am planning to disseminate the results in an academic publications. If you are interested in reading the outcomes of my findings at the end of the study, please do email me, so I can share them with you and let you know where and how you can access them.

**Who is organising and funding this study?**

The study is self-funded, and organised by the researcher (Sahar Alamri), supervised by

- 1- Dr Salter-Dvorak, Hania (Lecturer in TESOL, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter)  
h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk
- 2- Dr Susan Riley (Lecturer in TESOL, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter)  
S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number....)

**Further information and contact details**

You can contact the research team for further information and/or to take part.

Sahar H. Alamri.  
sa522@exeter.ac.uk  
+44 (0) 7477141514  
+966 532010342

Or

Dr. Hania Salter-Dvorak,  
Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter  
Email: [h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)

If you are not happy with any aspect of the project and wish to complain – please contact:  
The department Ethics Officer or Ethics Committee Chair.  
[dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk)

Or

Gail Seymour, Research Ethics and Governance Manager  
[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk)  
01392 726621

Thank you for your interest in this project

## Information sheet for students (Arabic version)

### ورقة معلومات للطلاب

اسم الباحثة: سحر العمري  
دعوة وموجز البحث:

أنا طالب في جامعة أكستر ، إنجلترا ، أحمل درجة الدكتوراه في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغير الناطقين بها (TESOL). أعمل حاليًا على أطروحتي النهائية للمشروع بعنوان "دراسة حالة حول آراء المعلمين حول الكتابة الأكاديمية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، في سياق الجامعة السعودية" ، تحت إشراف الدكتورة هانيا سالتر - دفورك والدكتور سوزان رايلي. أنا أدعوك للمشاركة في هذا البحث. قبل الموافقة على المشاركة ، من المهم أن تفهم طبيعة مشاركتك. يرجى أخذ الوقت الكافي للنظر في المعلومات بعناية ومناقشتها مع العلة أو الأصدقاء إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك ، أو طرح أسئلة الباحث.

#### الغرض من البحث:

هناك تركيز متزايد على بحث آراء المعلمين كعنصر أساسي في تطوير كتابة الطلاب. لذلك ، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من العمليات المتعلقة بالتعليقات التي يقدمها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية حول الكتابة الأكاديمية وكيف هي تجربتك في تعليقات المعلمين على كتابتك الأكاديمية.

#### لماذا تم الاتصال بي؟

في هذه الدراسة ، تم الاتصال بك لأنك طالبة في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية. إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ، فسيتمكن ذلك ، بصفتي الباحث ، من الحصول على معلومات حول كيفية تلقي عملية تلقي التعليقات من معلمك الأكاديمي.

#### ماذا تتضمن المشاركة؟

سيطلب منك المشاركة في المقابلات. سيتم إجراء مقابلة واحدة مرة واحدة قبل أن تتلقى أول رد فعل ، ثم بعد تلقي كل تعليق على مهلك (ثلاث إلى أربع مرات). المقابلات ستجري في الوقت والمكان المناسب لك. لن تستغرق كل مقابلة أكثر من 30 دقيقة. ستكون المقابلات بلغة العربية ، ويتم تسجيل الصوت لأغراض البحث والتحليل. ستكون البيانات التي يتم جمعها سرية ولن تتم مشاركتها مع أي طرف. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، لن يتم مشاركة المعلومات الشخصية الفردية مثل الأسماء. في كل مقابلة ، يُطلب منك تقديم مهنتك الكتابية بعد حصولك على ملاحظات المدرسين.

#### ما هي فوائد المشاركة؟

إن إجراء هذه الدراسة بمساعدة مشاركتك سيساعد في دراسة عملية التغذية الراجعة في الكتابة الأكاديمية بلغة الإنجليزية ، مما قد يؤدي إلى استكشاف نتائج جديدة قد تدعم المعلمين والأبحاث التعليمية لتكون على دراية بأي من ممارسات التدريس والتعلم والتحفيز والإنسان. التطورات المعرفية قد تقدم هذه الدراسة. قد تساعد مشاركتك المعلمين أيضًا على تثقيف الطلاب بشكل فعال ، وتحسين الأساليب التدريسية والمبادئ الخاصة بهم.

#### ما هي المساوئ والمخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة؟

لا أعتقد أن المشاركة في البحث تنطوي على أي مخاطر متوقعة. ومع ذلك ، يجب أن تكون على علم بأن لديك جميع الحقوق في عدم الإجابة على أي أسئلة خلال المقابلات التي قد تشعر بعدم الارتياح.

#### ماذا سيحدث إذا لم أرغب في الاستمرار في الدراسة؟

مشاركتكم تطوعية تمامًا. يمكنك التوقف عن المشاركة في أي وقت دون الحاجة إلى إعطاء سبب ، ويمكنك أن تطلب سحب أي وقت وسيتم حذف بياناتك.

#### كيف سيتم الحفاظ على سرية معلوماتي؟

تعالج جامعة أكستر البيانات الشخصية لأغراض إجراء الأبحاث في المصلحة العامة. ستعمل الجامعة على أن تكون شفافة بشأن معالجتها لبياناتك الشخصية. إذا كنت لديك أي استفسارات حول معالجة الجامعة لبياناتك الشخصية التي لا يمكن حلها بواسطة فريق البحث ، يمكن الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات من موظف حماية البيانات بالجامعة عبر إرسال بريد إلكتروني [dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk) أو [www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection)

"إشعار حماية البيانات - سيتم استخدام المعلومات التي توفرها لأغراض البحث وسيتم معالجة بياناتك الشخصية وفقًا للتشريعات الحالية لحماية البيانات وإشعار الجامعة المقدم إلى مكتب مفوض المعلومات. سيتم التعامل مع بياناتك الشخصية بسرية تامة ولن يتم الكشف عنها لأي طرف ثالث غير مصرح به. سيتم نشر نتائج البحث في صيغة مجهولة المصدر: "البيانات الوحيدة التي يتم طلبها منك هي عنوان

بريدك الإلكتروني (لمزيد من الاتصالات ، يتم قبول أي وسائل اتصالات أخرى أيضا) ، وإجابات المقبلات ، وكتابتك. سيتم جمع هذه البيانات شخصياً ، ثم يتم نقل بياناتك ، لأغراض التخزين فقط ، إلى قرص صلب خارجي آمن جداً ، بحيث لا يستطيع أي شخص بخلاف البحث الوصول إليه. سيتم الاحتفاظ ببياناتك فقط مدة هذه الدراسة ، لاحظ أن اسك لن يتم تضمينه في أي مكان مع البيانات ، بل يجب أن يكون اسماً مستعاراً فقط.

هل سأستلم أي مدفوعات للمشاركة؟  
لا ، مشاركتك تتم بالكامل على أساس طوعي.

ماذا سيحدث لنتائج هذه الدراسة؟

أخطط لنشر النتائج في المنشورات الأكاديمية. إذا كنت مهتماً بقراءة نتائج النتائج التي توصلت إليها في نهاية الدراسة ، فيرجى إرسال رسالة إلكترونية إليّ ، حتى أتمكن من مشاركتها معك وإخبارك بمكان وكيفية الوصول إليها.

من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل هذه الدراسة؟

تم تنظيم الدراسة من قبل الباحثة (سحر العمري) ، تحت إشراف  
1- الدكتورة سالتر-دفوراك ، هانيا (محاضر في TESOL ، كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية ، جامعة أكستر)  
[h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)

2- الدكتورة سوزان رابلي (محاضر في TESOL ، كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية ، جامعة أكستر)  
[S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk)

من الذي استعرض هذه الدراسة؟  
تمت مراجعة هذا المشروع من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث في جامعة إكسبر (الرقم المرجعي ...)

مزيد من المعلومات وتفاصيل الاتصال

يمكنك الاتصال بفريق البحث لمزيد من المعلومات و / أو المشاركة.  
سحر العمري

[sa522@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:sa522@exeter.ac.uk)

+44 (0) 7477141514

+966 532010342

أو

اسم المشرف: دكتور سالتر-دفوراك ، هانيا  
كلية الدراسات العليا للتربية ، جامعة أكستر

البريد الإلكتروني: [h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)

إذا لم تكن راضياً عن أي جانب من جوانب المشروع وترغب في تقديم شكوى - فيرجى الاتصال بـ:  
مسؤول الشؤون الأخلاقية أو رئيس لجنة الأخلاقيات.

[dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk)

غيل سيمور ، أخلاقيات البحث ومدير إدارة الحكم

[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk)

01392 726621

شكراً لمشاركتك في هذا البحث.

## Information sheet for teachers (Arabic version)

### ورقة معلومات لمعلمات الكتابة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية

اسم الباحثة: سحر العمري

دعوة وموجز البحث:

أنا طالب في جامعة أكستر ، إنجلترا ، أحمل درجة الدكتوراه في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغير الناطقين بها (TESOL). أعمل حاليًا على أطروحتي النهائية للمشروع بعنوان "دراسة حالة حول آراء المعلمين حول الكتابة الأكاديمية للغة الإنجليزية كغاية أجنبية ، في سياق الجامعة السعودية" ، تحت إشراف الدكتورة هانيا سالتر - دفوراك والدكتورة سوزان رايلي. أنا أدعوك للمشاركة في هذا البحث. قبل الموافقة على المشاركة ، من المهم أن تفهم طبيعة مشاركتك. يرجى أخذ الوقت الكافي للنظر في المعلومات بعناية ومناقشتها مع العائلة أو الأصدقاء إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك ، أو طرح أسئلة الباحث.

الغرض من البحث:

هناك تركيز متزايد على بحث آراء المعلمين كعنصر أساسي في تطوير كتابة الطلاب. منذ عام 1970 ، تم تحويل التركيز على تطوير كتابة في اللغة الثانية من المنتج إلى العملية ويعتبر بعض الباحثين الأخطاء كجزء من عملية تعلم الطلاب. ولذلك ، فإن فعالية التغذية الراجعة في سياق تصحيح الخطأ أمر مهم للغاية ، وبالتالي ، فإن السؤال هو ما إذا كان يمكن للتغذية الراجعة التأثير بشكل إيجابي على كتابة طلاب في اللغة الثانية أم لا.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف ثلاثة أهداف رئيسية وهي: أولاً ، كيف تؤثر ردود الفعل على الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلاب. ثانياً ، كيفية مشاركة الطلاب في عملية التعليقات كطريقة للتعليم وتحسين كتابتهم الأكاديمية. ويتمثل هدف آخر مهم في فهم وجهة نظر المعلمين بشأن التغذية الراجعة وكيفية تأثير فهمهم لنوع التغذية الراجعة التي يقدمونها ونوعيتها.

لماذا تم الاتصال بي؟

في هذه الدراسة ، يتم الاتصال بك لأنك معلم كتابة أكاديمية للغة الإنجليزية. إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ، فسيتمكن ذلك بصفتي الباحث ، من الحصول على معلومات حول كيفية تقديم عملية التغذية الراجعة إلى كتابات الطلاب الأكاديمية وفهم معرفة المعلمين ومعتقداتهم تجاه التعليقات.

ماذا تتضمن المشاركة؟

سيطلب منك المشاركة في المقابلة. ستكون المقابلة فردية وتجري في الوقت والمكان المناسب لك. ستشمل هذه المقابلة 40 دقيقة مقابلة شبه منظمة باللغة العربية ، تسجيل صوتي لأغراض البحث والتحليل. سيكون موضوع المقابلة تغذية راجعة وتعليم الكتابة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية. ستكون البيانات التي يتم جمعها سرية ولن تتم مشاركتها مع أي طرف. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، لن يتم مشاركة المعلومات الشخصية الفردية مثل الأسماء.

ما هي فوائد المشاركة؟

إن إجراء هذه الدراسة بمساعدة مشاركتك سيساعد في دراسة عملية التغذية الراجعة في الكتابة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية ، مما قد يؤدي إلى استكشاف نتائج جديدة قد تدعم المعلمين والأبحاث التعليمية لتكون على دراية بأي من ممارسات التدريس والتعلم والتحفيز والإنسان. التطورات المعرفة قد تقدم هذه الدراسة. قد تساعد مشاركتك المعلمين أيضاً على تثقيف الطلاب بشكل فعال ، وتحسين أساليب التدريس والمبادئ الخاصة بهم.

ما هي المساوئ والمخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة؟

لا أعتقد أن المشاركة في البحث تنطوي على أي مخاطر متوقعة. ومع ذلك ، يجب أن تكون على علم بأن لديك جميع الحقوق في عدم الإجابة على أي أسئلة خلال المقابلات التي قد تشعر بعدم الارتياح.

ماذا سيحدث إذا لم أرغب في الاستمرار في الدراسة؟

مشاركتكم تطوعية تماماً. يمكنك التوقف عن المشاركة في أي وقت دون الحاجة إلى إعطاء سبب ، ويمكنك أن تطلب سحب أي وقت وسيتم حذف بياناتك.

كيف سيتم الحفاظ على سرية معلوماتي؟



تعالج جامعة أكستر البيانات الشخصية لأغراض إجراء الأبحاث في المصلحة العامة. ستعمل الجامعة على أن تكون شفافة بشأن معالجتها لبياناتك الشخصية. إذا كنت لديك أي استفسارات حول معالجة الجامعة لبياناتك الشخصية التي لا يمكن حلها بواسطة فريق البحث ، يمكن الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات من موظف حماية البيانات بالجامعة عبر إرسال بريد إلكتروني [dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk) أو [www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection)

"إشعار حماية البيانات - سيتم استخدام المعلومات التي توفرها لأغراض البحث وسيتم معالجة بياناتك الشخصية وفقاً للتشريعات الحالية لحماية البيانات وإشعار الجامعة المقدم إلى مكتب مفوض المعلومات. سيتم التعامل مع بياناتك الشخصية بسرية تامة ولن يتم الكشف عنها لأي طرف ثالث غير مصرح به. سيتم نشر نتائج البحث في صيغة مجهولة المصدر: "البيانات الوحيدة التي يتم طلبها منك هي عنوان بريدك الإلكتروني (لمزيد من الاتصالات ، وأي وسائل اتصالات أخرى مقبولة أيضاً) وإجابات المقابلات الخاصة بك. بعد ذلك ، يتم نقل بياناتك ، لأغراض التخزين فقط ، إلى قرص صلب خارجي آمن جداً ، بحيث لا يمكن لأي شخص الوصول إلى البيانات. سيتم الاحتفاظ ببياناتك طوال مدة هذه الدراسة فقط. لاحظ أن اسمك لن يتم تضمينه في أي مكان مع البيانات ، بل يجب أن يكون اسماً مستعاراً فقط.

هل سأستلم أي مدفوعات للمشاركة؟  
لا ، مشاركتك تتم بالكامل على أساس طوعي.

ماذا سيحدث لنتائج هذه الدراسة؟  
أخطط لنشر النتائج في المنشورات الأكاديمية. إذا كنت مهتماً بقراءة نتائج النتائج التي توصلت إليها في نهاية الدراسة ، فيرجى إرسال رسالة إلكترونية إليّ ، حتى أتمكن من مشاركتها معك وإخبارك بمكان وكيفية الوصول إليها.

من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل هذه الدراسة؟

تم تنظيم الدراسة من قبل الباحثة (سحر العمري) ، تحت إشراف  
1- الدكتورة سالتير-دفوراك ، هانيا (محاضر في TESOL ، كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية ، جامعة أكستر) [h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)  
2- الدكتورة سوزان رابلي (محاضر في TESOL ، كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية ، جامعة أكستر) [S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk)

من الذي استعرض هذه الدراسة؟  
تمت مراجعة هذا المشروع من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث في جامعة إكسبر (الرقم المرجعي ...)

مزيد من المعلومات وتفاصيل الاتصال

يمكنك الاتصال بفريق البحث لمزيد من المعلومات و / أو المشاركة.  
سحر العمري  
[sa522@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:sa522@exeter.ac.uk)

+44 (0) 7477141514  
+966 532010342

أو  
اسم المشرف: دكتور سالتير-دفوراك ، هانيا  
كلية الدراسات العليا للتربية ، جامعة أكستر  
البريد الإلكتروني: [h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.salter-dvorak@exeter.ac.uk)

إذا لم تكن راضياً عن أي جانب من جوانب المشروع وترغب في تقديم شكوى - فيرجى الاتصال ب:  
مسؤول الشؤون الأخلاقية أو رئيس لجنة الأخلاقيات.  
[dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:dvc-research@exeter.ac.uk)

غيل سيمور ، أخلاقيات البحث ومدير إدارة الحكم  
[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk)  
01392 726621

شكراً لمشاركتك في هذا البحث.

## Appendix 8

### Consent form for students (English version)

#### CONSENT FORM: Students



Participant Identification Number:

#### CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: A Case Study of teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context.

Name of Researcher: Sahar Alamri

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated..... (version no.....) for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.
3. I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by members of the research team, individuals from the University of Exeter, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.
4. I understand that taking part involves anonymised interview transcripts for research analysis.
5. I understand that taking part involves audio recordings to be used for the purposes of research analysis.
6. I understand that taking part involves sharing my writing assignments with the researcher.
7. I agree to take part in the above project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sahar Alamri

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher  
taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Consent form for students (Arabic version)

عنوان المشروع البحثي: دراسة حالة حول التغذية الراجعة على الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلّابات في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة السعودية.

### نموذج الموافقة

اختر هنا

اسم الباحثة: سحر العمري

- 1 . أؤكد أنني قد قرأت ورقة المعلومات مؤرخة ..... (النسخة رقم .....). لقد أتيتحت لي الفرصة للنظر في ورقة المعلومات وطرح الأسئلة وكانت الإجابة مرضية.
- 2 . أتفهم أن مشاركتي تطوعية ولدي الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون إعطاء أي سبب ودون أن تتأثر حقوقي القانونية.
- 3 . أتفهم أن الأقسام ذات الصلة من البيانات التي تم جمعها أثناء الدراسة، يمكن أن ينظر إليها أعضاء فريق البحث ، أفراد من جامعة اكستر ، حيث تكون مناسبة لمشاركتي في هذا البحث. أعطي إننا لهؤلاء الأفراد للوصول إلى سجلاتي.
- 4 . أتفهم أن المشاركة تنطوي على مقابلة [هوية / مجهول / غامضة] نسخ لتحليل البحوث
- 5 . أتفهم أن المشاركة تنطوي على التسجيلات الصوتية لاستخدامها في الأغراض تحليل البحوث
- 6 . أتفهم أن المشاركة تنطوي على كتابة مهام لتتم مشاركتها مع الباحثة للاستخدام في مشروع البحث.
- 7 . أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع أعلاه

(توقيع المشاركة)

التاريخ

(اسم المشاركة)



سحر العمري

(توقيع الباحثة)

التاريخ

(اسم الباحثة)



## Consent form for teachers (English version)

### CONSENT FORM: Teachers



Participant Identification Number:

#### CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: A Case Study of teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context.

Name of Researcher: Sahar Alamri

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated..... (version no.....) for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.
3. I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by members of the research team, individuals from the University of Exeter, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.
4. I understand that taking part involves anonymised interview transcripts for research analysis.
5. I understand that taking part involves audio recordings to be used for the purposes of research analysis.
6. I agree to take part in the above project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Sahar Alamri

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher  
taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Consent form for teachers (Arabic version)

عنوان المشروع البحثي: دراسة حالة حول التغذية الراجعة على الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلّابات في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة السعودية.

### نموذج الموافقة

اختر هنا

اسم الباحثة: سحر العمري

1. أؤكد أنني قد قرأت ورقة المعلومات مؤرخة ..... (النسخة رقم .....). لقد أتيت لي الفرصة للنظر في ورقة المعلومات وطرح الأسئلة وكانت الإجابة مرضية.

2. أتفهم أن مشاركتي تطوعية ولدي الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون إعطاء أي سبب ودون أن تتأثر حقوقي القانونية.

3. أتفهم أن الأقسام ذات الصلة من البيانات التي تم جمعها أثناء الدراسة، يمكن أن ينظر إليها أعضاء فريق البحث، أفراد من جامعة اكستر، حيث تكون مناسبة لمشاركتي في هذا البحث. أعطي إذنًا لهؤلاء الأفراد للوصول إلى سجلاتي.

4. أتفهم أن المشاركة تنطوي على مقابلة [هوية / مجهول / غامضة] نسخ لتحليل البحث

5. أتفهم أن المشاركة تنطوي على التسجيلات الصوتية لاستخدامها في الأغراض تحليل البحث

6. أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع أعلاه

(توقيع المشاركة)

التاريخ

(اسم المشاركة)



سحر العمري

(توقيع الباحثة)

التاريخ

(اسم الباحثة)

## **SUBMISSION PROCEDURE**

Staff and students should follow the procedure below.

**Post Graduate Taught Students (Graduate School of Education):** Please submit your completed application to your first supervisor. Please see the submission flowchart for further information on the process.

**All other students** should discuss their application with their supervisor(s) / dissertation tutor / tutor and gain their approval prior to submission. Students should submit evidence of approval with their application, e.g. a copy of the supervisors email approval.

**All staff** should submit their application to the appropriate email address below.

This application form and examples of your consent form, information sheet and translations of any documents which are not written in English should be submitted by email to the SSIS Ethics Secretary via one of the following email addresses:

[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

[ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and students in the Graduate School of Education.

Please note that applicants will be required to submit a new application if ethics approval has not been granted within 1 year of first submission.

## Appendix 9

### Certificate of ethical approval



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus  
Heavitree Road  
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

#### CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: **A Case Study of Teachers' Feedback on EFL Academic Writing, in the Saudi University Context**

Researcher(s) name: Sahar Alamri

Supervisor(s): Dr. Hania Salter-Dvorak  
Dr. Susan Riley

This project has been approved for the period

From: 01/03/2019


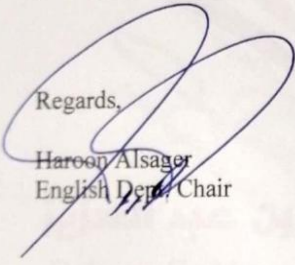
To: 31/12/2019

Ethics Committee approval reference: D1819-034

Signature:  Date: 14/02/2019  
(Professor Dongbo Zhang, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)

## Appendix 10

### Prince university approval

<p>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Education Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University College of Science &amp; Humanity Studies ( 056 )</p>	 <p>جامعة الأمير سطام بن عبد العزيز Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University</p>	<p>الملك عبدالعزيز بن عبد الرحمن آل سعود وزير التعليم بمؤامرة الأمير سلطان بن عبدالعزيز كلية العلوم والدراسات الإنسانية ( ٠٥٦ )</p>
<p>Feb 11, 2019</p>		
<p>Dear Mrs. Sahar Alamri,</p>		
<p>It is our pleasure to inform you that the English Department, College of Sciences and Humanities at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University has approved your request to collect data and conduct the experimental part of your study (March/01/2019 – May/30/2019). The Dept. is willing to provide you any assistant upon your request.</p>		
<p>Regards,  Haroon Alsager English Dept. Chair</p>		
<p>Attach : _____ : المرفقات Date : _____ : التاريخ No.: _____ : الرقم</p>		
<p>P.O.Box: 83 Alkharj 11942, Tel: +966 11 5888000, Fax: +966 11 5888001 ص.ب. ٨٣ الخرج ١١٩٤٢، هاتف: +٩٦٦ ١١ ٥٨٨٨٠٠٠، فاكس: +٩٦٦ ١١ ٥٨٨٨٠٠١</p>		

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## Appendix 11

### Sample of the exam paper (Year Three)

**Question 1** (13 marks)

**Write an essay about any ONE of the following topics:**

- Electronic equipment has made life easy. What are the causes-and-effects?
- Make a comparison between online shopping and shopping at a store.
- Your opinion about the importance of games in our life.

6

Make a compar ison bet ween online shopping and shopping at a store. I can not get for a long time I am shopping online. I felt scared when my order is not coming. I became I felt the online shopping is better. They are very different between online shopping and shopping at a store.

The first difference between online shopping and shopping at a store is the time. The time in online shopping is very fast and they can get it in a few days. In contrast the shopping at a store is very slow because you have to go to the store to get it.

The second difference between online shopping and shopping at a store is the price. In online shopping is very cheap. I can find the clothes and shoes in the internet and home. In contrast the shopping at a store is very expensive. Because the store is very big and the clothes are very good and the price is very high.

In my opinion, the online shopping is the best because it is very easy and fast.

-1 unity  
-1 clarity  
✓ 3 SB  
-2 SP



Question 2

(5 marks)

A) Rewrite the general sentences below with more specific details.

1. I like to eat food before I sleep.

~~I like to eat food before I sleep.~~ ✗

2. We returned from the store.

~~We returned from the store.~~ ✗

3. My friend is reading a book.

~~My friend is reading a book.~~ ✗

4. Our guest enjoyed the dinner.

~~Our guest enjoyed the dinner.~~ ✗

5. He bought some fruit.

~~He bought some fruit.~~ ✗

(5 marks)

B) Write M above the main clause in each sentence. Write D above the dependent clause.

1. After we got our suitcases, they drove us to home.

~~After we got our suitcases,~~ ✓

2. Almost twenty-four hours had passed since we left home.

~~Almost twenty-four hours had passed~~ ✓

3. As soon as I arrived at the airport, my brother was there to take me home.

~~As soon as I arrived at the airport,~~ ✓

4. Before we left on our trip, we wrote to our cousin in Dammam and told him our plan.

~~Before we left on our trip,~~ ✓

5. The fish were left on the beach because the tide went out.

~~The fish were left on the beach~~ ✓

6. When I talked to my friend, he likes to tell me about his adventures.

~~When I talked to my friend,~~ ✓

7. I walk a kilometer before I go to college.

~~I walk a kilometer before~~ ✓

8. When we got back home, it started to rain.

~~When we got back home,~~ ✓

9. After we won the lottery last week, my wife and I decided to take a trip.

~~After we won the lottery last week,~~ ✓

10. They were waiting at the airport when we arrived.

~~They were waiting at the airport~~ ✓

**Question 3**

(5 marks)

Circle the correct quantity expression in each sentence.

(Many / A lot of) creativity is necessary for certain types of technology jobs.

There are (a few / a little) places where the sea level is rising.

(A little / several) bills in Congress have tried to protect Internet users from fraud.

Did you know that (a few / a little) sleep deprivation can harm a person's judgment.

(A lot of / many) time is spent doing research on cures for cancer.

(5 marks)

Rewrite the following sentences to show similarities or contrast. Choose the correct connector in parentheses to add more coherence.

Limes are green. Lemons are yellow. (similarly / unlike)

In KSA, people eat a lot of rice. Koreans serve rice at most meals. (in contrast / similarly)

A tortoise can live in water or on land. A fish cannot. (unlike / like)

CDs record only sound. DVDs contain sound and video. (unlike / like)

Biologists do research in labs. Chemist work in labs. (similarly / in contrast)

Read the following sentences. Write (S) if the sentence involves two simultaneous actions. Write (I) if the sentence involves one action interrupting the other. (5 marks)

My mother was cooking lunch when I reached home. ✗

While she was talking on phone, her baby was sleeping. ✓

The sun was shining when I got up. ✗

I watched TV while it was raining outside. ✗

Ahmed was driving when the rain started. ✓

I was eating dinner and watching TV. ✓

We learned to read while we were living in the USA. ✗

The nurse was checking her BP while the doctor was listening to her lungs. ✗

The prime minister was sleeping when he received the call. ✗

Aaron called Mansoor while Mansoor was still driving. ✗





## Appendix 12

### Guidance sheet by (Min, 2005,307)

1. Read the first sentence. What is the topic? What is the controlling idea? Circle them. Is the topic sentence a statement of opinion, intent, a combination of both, or just simple fact? If it is a statement of fact, help the writer rewrite it so that it becomes a real topic sentence (i.e., a statement of opinion, intent, or a combination of both).
2. After reading the topic sentence, what do you expect to read in the following sentences?
3. Now read the following two or three sentences. Did the writer write according to your expectation(s)? If not, what did the writer write instead? Do you think that writer was sidetracked? Go back to the bridge (second sentence). Did the author choose a word that is not the controlling idea to develop? Did the author talk about an idea more general than or in contrast to the controlling idea? If none of these applies, reread the topic sentence to make sure that you understand the writer's intention.
4. Read the examples. How many examples are there? Are they well balanced (in terms of sentence length and depth of discussion)? Are they relevant to the controlling idea in the topic sentence? If not, explain to the writer why they are irrelevant. Also work with the writer to think of more things to talk about if the examples are too general or to delete some of the redundant sentences.
5. Read the last few sentences in the paragraph. Is there a restatement at the end of the paragraph? If not, work with the writer on a concluding sentence.
6. What did you learn from reading this paragraph, either in language use or content? Is there anything nice you want to say about this paragraph? Are there any grammatical errors or inappropriate word usage?