ESL Students' Comments on Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback in a Freshman Composition Class[1]

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Abstract

This study explored ESL students' comments on teacher's written corrective feedback in a freshman composition class to find out whether they thought positively about the feedback and how they perceived the power relationship with the teacher. The study followed a qualitative design. Thirteen ESL students were asked to comment on the teacher's written corrective feedback on their essays. Findings indicated that students thought highly of the effectiveness of the teacher's feedback, and most of them viewed the teacher as a person of great power. They appreciated the feedback tremendously and many of them intended to make changes based on the received feedback. Suggestions and limitations of the study are shared to guide future research.

Resumen

Este estudio exploró los comentarios de los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) sobre la retroalimentación correctiva escrita del maestro en una clase de composición de primer año para averiguar si pensaban positivamente sobre la retroalimentación y cómo percibían la relación de poder con el maestro. El estudio siguió un diseño cualitativo. Se pidió a trece estudiantes de ESL que comentaran sobre la retroalimentación correctiva escrita del maestro sobre sus ensayos. Los hallazgos indicaron que los estudiantes tenían buena opinión de la efectividad de la retroalimentación del maestro y la mayoría de ellos veía al maestro como una persona de gran poder. Apreciaron enormemente los comentarios y muchos de ellos tenían la intención de hacer cambios basados en los comentarios recibidos. Se comparten sugerencias y limitaciones del estudio para orientar futuras investigaciones.

Introduction

I have been teaching EFL and ESL for ten years. During my teaching years, I have developed an interest in teaching composition and realized that giving written corrective feedback is an integral part of my instruction. I also wondered whether students thought positively about my feedback, what kinds of feedback they wanted to receive the most and how they perceived the power relationship with me as a teacher. In general, when studying written corrective feedback, some researchers focused on the effects of different kinds of written corrective feedback (Bitchener et al., 2005; Chandler, 2003; Hartshorn et al., 2010, Kepner, 1991); some (Bitchener, 2008; Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999) studied the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (Bitchener, 2008) and whether feedback on grammar should be given (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999); others paid attention to research design in studying feedback (Bruton, 2009; Guenette, 2007). More specific literature regarding these works and other aspects of written corrective feedback are presented below.

Literature Review

Definitions of Corrective Feedback

Valezy and Spada (2006) defined corrective feedback as any kind of response given to the learner with proof of errors included. This definition is rather limited as it focuses only on the incorrect forms of language, or errors. Leeman (2007) offered a more inclusive definition of corrective feedback, which is a way to inform learners whether they have been successful or unsuccessful after a certain process. For language acquisition, feedback targets learner output and may include comments on "the accuracy, communicative success, or content of learner utterances or discourse" (p. 112). This means there are two kinds of feedback, spoken and written. According to Leeman (2007), feedback can also be divided into positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback informs success and negative feedback informs failure. This paper will use Leeman's (2007) definition as the basis: Feedback is a way to inform writers whether they have communicated in writing successfully or not.

Regarding corrective feedback, the concept of errors should be mentioned. Ferris (1999) noticed that while some errors are fixable such as subject-verb agreement, comma splices and verb form errors, others are

1 This is a refereed paper. Received: 31 July, 2019. Accepted: 13 June, 2020.
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unfixable including lexical errors and issues with sentence structures. Truscott (1996) stated that fixable errors are those associated with lexical and morphological knowledge and unfixable errors are syntax. In general, Ferris (1999) and Truscott (1996) had different ideas about what errors could and could not be treated. However, both seemed to agree that syntactical errors are untreatable.

Although errors have attracted a lot of attention within research, there has been an emphasis on the communicative purpose of the written texts. Semke (1984) believed that one paper may have quite a few "red marks," but it does not mean the quality of the paper is bad, as many of those red marks do not prevent the paper from communicating with the reader. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) also stated that feedback does not have anything to do with either form or content, but with how efficient the communication of the text is. It is related to "how well the writer's choices achieve stated or implied purposes given the needs and expectations of an intended audience" (p. 166).

Arguments in Giving Written Corrective Feedback

There are four main arguments associated with written corrective feedback: Whether it should be provided or not; what types of feedback, content or form-related, should be given first; whether feedback on grammar should be included; and whether positive feedback should be accompanied with negative feedback.

The first argument is whether teachers should give feedback or not. Semke (1984) conducted research on students who studied German as a second language and found that a student could improve his or her writing just by practicing writing; feedback was not necessary. However, Hartshorn et al. (2010) said that teachers who use written corrective feedback never doubt its value and only question how to use it well to improve the accuracy of students' writing. Similarly, Atmaca (2016) asserted that some teachers like marking all errors in students' essays because they want them to write English correctly.

The second argument is whether to give feedback on form first, or content first, or both of them at the same time. Ashwell (2000) believed that some teachers focus on content first so students can make large-scale revisions on their writing in earlier drafts, then make small-scale revisions later. Zamel (1985) also thought that problems associated with the meaning level should be tackled first. However, Hartshorn et al. (2010) stated that students need to master accuracy in all writing aspects so as for their writing to be truly authentic. He seemed to believe in giving feedback on form and content at the same time.

The third argument is about giving feedback on grammar. Truscott (1996) claimed that grammar correction should be avoided at all cost. He believed that correcting grammar errors cannot better students' writing and can even harm it because grammar mistakes need to be professionally tackled. For example, they should be corrected in two or three different ways so students will not make those errors in the future. Additionally, he believed that teaching grammar is usually regarded as a must and it is common belief that grammar correction helps students improve their writing, which is not necessarily true.

However, Ferris (1999) disagreed with Truscott (1996). She argued that his conclusion is "premature and overly strong" (p. 1). Although Truscott (1996) mentioned multiple research to support his argument, Ferris (1999) believed that the results of those investigations are manipulated. She thought Truscott (1996) may have risked harming students because if teachers and researchers agree with his idea that grammar correction is unnecessary, they will change their commenting behaviors and students will not be able to improve their writing. Ferris (1999) stated that it is still important to focus on grammar errors and she herself proposed some questions related to error correction to be further researched.

The fourth argument is whether teachers should only give negative feedback, or they should add positive feedback. Daiker (1989) mentioned Christensen (1962), who distinguished between "school" tradition and "scholarly" tradition. The former means teachers should only give negative feedback and the latter means positive feedback should be given as well. Christensen (1962) supported the latter. He asserted that praise is crucial to students, especially those who have not received a lot of it, as the lack of positive feedback may cause writing apprehension. Besides, Daiker (1989) realized that in the "Harbrace College Handbook Correction Chart," there are 71 symbols and these symbols exist because teachers can find so many errors in students' writing that they do not have time to explain in full sentences. It is worth noticing that there is no symbol for praise in this chart.

Considerations for Written Corrective Feedback

Feedback should be understandable. Zamel (1985) indicated that teachers' feedback can be contradictory, which causes student confusion. Additionally, teachers use various and sometimes opposing principles to give feedback as they have different experiences and beliefs in feedback provision. For instance, she noted when students are told to fix their idea, they may be asked to correct their surface mistakes as well, and this causes great confusion as they do not know which kind of error should be fixed first.

With that, Zamel (1985) suggested that when giving feedback, teachers should avoid comments related to abstract rules and provide text-specific instructions and suggestions. Furthermore, teachers need to ask whether students understand the feedback as well as ask them to point out the feedback they do not understand. Ferris (1997) added that teachers need to thoroughly consider their methods of giving feedback and make students understand those methods. Also, they should assist students in revision as well as make sure they really think about the feedback, either from teachers or from friends. Zarifi (2017) affirmed that some Iranian students of a low English proficiency level thought indirect feedback was perplexing. For example, if a verb was underlined, they did not know if the mistake was the verb tense, the subject-verb agreement, or whether the verb missed a preposition. Mekala and Ponmani (2017) also said that students prefer direct feedback so they can write more fluently and correctly in the second language. In general, feedback has to be clear so students know what errors to fix and how to fix them.

Feedback should be useful, frequent and achievable. Hartshorn et al. (2010) believed in giving written corrective feedback that is "meaningful, timely, constant and manageable" (p. 87). They preferred indirect coded feedback that indicates the type and place of errors. However, they stated that students have to correct the errors by themselves. They established a system of codes (see Appendix A), and these codes are considered "meaningful" feedback. Next, "timely and constant" means feedback is coded and given back in the next class, and students write constantly nearly every class. Finally, "manageable" means teachers have enough time to give feedback and students have enough time to understand and correct errors from feedback.

Feedback should be two-way. Ferris (2002) indicated that effects of other types of feedback such as teacher-student conferences and peer-review have not been researched. However, teacher-student conferences have caught attention of some researchers. Semke (1984) encouraged teachers and students to share information together, instead of teachers marking by themselves and students receiving the writing full of red marks. Furthermore, he stated when students repeat certain errors, teachers can explain and help students do further practice on them so they will not make these errors anymore. Teachers can also give the correct forms if students want to know them. Besides, Zamel (1985) believed that conferences should be established so teachers and students can find out important aspects of the writing pieces. She affirmed that teachers can understand the meaning and logic behind certain mistakes and help students change the text. At the same time, students can realize the complicated process of giving feedback and clarifying texts that are unclear or incomprehensible to assist teachers.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Teachers in a higher position. Saito (1994) asserted that students are quite skeptical of peer-review. This may be because students put more trust in teachers than they do in peers and believe that teachers can give more accurate comments. Also, they may want to get comments directly from teachers so they can make changes upon them to produce a version that can satisfy the teachers. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) asserted that teachers also think of themselves as those in a higher position, more intellectual and more adroit in using words. Thus, teachers as readers can exert control upon students as writers and can make corrections on aspects that do not satisfy the teachers' perception of good writing. Additionally, Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) noted teachers are also the ones to decide the content, the format and the benchmarks for good writing. In fact, Bartholomae (1980) affirmed that English teachers usually regard the writing as faulty if it does not come up to their expectation. When teachers read the writing, they pay attention to how much the norms are breached by individual styles; they read as policemen and gate-keepers. Agreeing with Bartholomae (1980), Zarifi (2017) stated that some students simply accept their teacher's feedback even though they do not understand it.

Teachers in an equal position. Zamel (1985) proposed that instead of seeing themselves as authorities, teachers should act as consultants or assistants to take part in the process of making meaning. In this case, Zamel (1985) prioritized feedback focusing on meaning, and wanted to build up a relationship based on collaboration with students. She believed teachers need to be truly keen on the writing and give honest feedback as readers, not judges or assessors. Bartholomae (1980) went on further to explain that teachers who do not understand certain parts in writing of students are usually the ones who can explain a Donald Barthelme's story or an e. e. cummings' poem in detail. Teachers should treat these two types of writing the same and should know that there are some motives behind the errors students make. Therefore, errors are actually meaningful. The fact that students make errors in writing does not mean they are inferior writers to teachers.

Additionally, Murray (1982) believed that the first reader of a writer is the writer himself or herself. At the beginning, there is no audience; the writers are also the audiences. Teachers are the ones that help nourish the conversation happening inside the writer's head between one self and the other self. He also added that teachers must teach based on the standards or levels of individual students, not from the standards teachers establish for them. This idea overlaps with Zamel's (1985) suggestion, which is "we should respond not so much to student writing but to student writers" (p. 97).

The literature review has provided rich background information for the study, which aims at answering the following questions.

Research Questions

1. *Based on teacher's written corrective feedback, what are the aspects students think they need to revise the most?*
2. *What is some feedback of the teacher that students do not understand?*
3. *What is some feedback of the teacher that students find helpful and want to get more?*
4. *In general, what do students think of the teacher's written corrective feedback?*
5. *What is the power relationship between students and teacher based on the teacher's written corrective feedback?*

Theoretical Framework

This study replicates the study of Kang and Dykema (2017), who used the "Critical Discourse Analysis" framework. First, it is essential to understand the definition of discourse. Fairclough (1995) said discourse mainly includes spoken or written texts; however, he looked at discourse as a form of social practice. It means discourse is used to perform social functions. Another definition of discourse was proposed by Van Dijk (1997), who presented discourse as a social phenomenon. For Van Dijk, discourse creates interaction within the society in the form of conversations or dialogues, which occur in various contexts such as informal talks with friends or formal professional meetings. From these two definitions, it is clear that discourse does not only mean texts, but it should also be considered in terms of its purpose, which is to help people communicate within a society.

Another definition of discourse was suggested by Link (1983), as cited in Meyer (2001). Link believed discourse regulates action; therefore, it carries power. With this definition, discourse does not only foster interaction but also decides who, among the people interacting with each other, has more power. Actually, the relationship between discourse and power has been mentioned significantly in the literature of critical discourse analysis. Wodak (2001) explained that discourse, worded as language, exhibits power in the society by indicating or articulating power, as well as pinpointing it especially when its resistance appears. Language does not create power, but it can defy or overthrow it, and disseminate power equally within the society for a short or long time.

Wodak (2001) also added that critical discourse analysis cares about how language is used to create power, which in turns, shapes language. For example, grammatical forms and discourse genres can express power. Similarly, Fairclough (1995) explained the connection between language and power by stating that its relationship talks a lot about democracy. For example, the language that different genders use can signify power imbalance.

Regarding the term "critical," Fairclough and Kress (1993) as cited in Wodak (2001) said that a critical description of discourse involves articulating the social constructs of the text as well as that of the discourse participants, who then connect with texts to forge meanings. Wodak (2001) added that "critical" means stepping away from the data, looking at them from a socio-political standpoint and considering them from the perspective of researchers. Moreover, Fairclough (1992) affirmed that critical methods do not only describe discourse, but also reveal how power and political principles constitute discourse. Critical methods also explain how discourse forms the status of and relationships among discourse participants, as well as their knowledge and ideologies, all of which are unknown to them. In brief, critical approaches provide an in-depth understanding of discourse by dissecting its relationship with various aspects such as power, justice, or identity.

As for critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2001) said it addresses social issues from the perspective of the subordinate and emphasizes the usage of discourse on creating power; it considers the subordinate's experience of being dominated and advocates for their equality. It takes side with them and strongly disapproves of those using discourse to establish power abuse. Wodak (2001) suggested another definition of critical discourse analysis. She stated that it aims at clarifying the connection among authority, inequity and power shown by discourse. Overall, critical discourse analysis wants to untangle the relationship between discourse and power and explains how the manipulation of discourse can lead to power abuse. It focuses on creating social justice.

Below is the "Three-dimensional conception of discourse" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73)

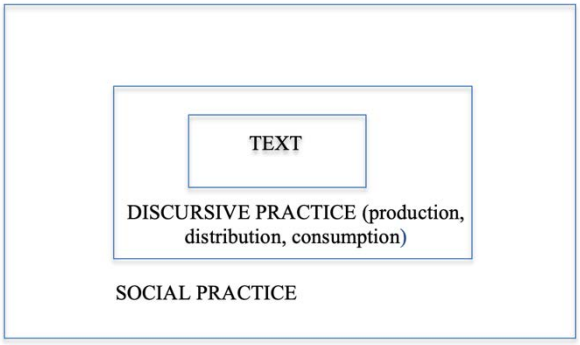

Figure 1: Three-dimensional concept of discourse (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73).

This concept can be understood as texts, or discourse, to be the basic aspect. When discourse is created, circulated and absorbed, this process is called "discursive practice." During "discursive practice," text also functions as part of social practice. In this case, discourse performs social purposes when produced, so it has more than just lexical meanings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study replicates the study of Kang and Dykema (2017), who used the framework of critical discourse analysis to investigate how students respond to teacher's written corrective feedback via written comments as well as how those comments help form a power relationship with the teacher. It followed the qualitative research method and was conducted in a freshman composition course of thirteen students, who are non-native speakers of English in the United States. I gave written corrective feedback in their papers and asked them to comment on my feedback using a specific prompt. The comments were then collected and analyzed based on the framework of critical discourse analysis.

Participants

Participants of this study included thirteen ESL students in a freshman composition course at Missouri State University. They were from Japan, China, Iran, Vietnam, Korea and Kenya who mostly took the freshman composition course as part of the general education requirement for graduation. Some were exchange students interested in the course. The participants included six male and seven female students at the age of 18-19 years on average. These students were chosen by convenience sampling as they were participating

in one of the freshman composition courses I taught at Missouri State University. Different from the study of Kang and Dykema (2017) where native students were selected as participants, this study aims at ESL students. This is important to the design of the study because it produced results that can be compared with results in the original study. From the comparison, meaningful conclusions were drawn regarding how American and ESL students perceived teacher's written corrective feedback and what they thought of the power relationship with the teacher.

Measures

The students were asked to type answers to the prompt adapted from the one used in the study of Kang and Dykema (2017). The prompt asked students to specify what writing aspects should be fixed the most in their papers, what feedback they did not understand and what feedback they found the most helpful and wanted to receive more. Below is the prompt.

> *Type your comments in a Word document using Times New Roman 12 and single space. Your comments should be at least half a page and answer three questions.*
>
> *From my feedback, what do you think are the aspects you need to revise the most?*
>
> *What is some feedback you don't understand?*
>
> *What is some feedback that you find very helpful and want to get more?*
>
> *Don't include your name in the paper. Print it out and submit in class for two extra credits.*
>
> (Adapted from Kang & Dekyma, 2017, p. 15)

Procedures

First, participants were informed about this study in the second week of class. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' perception of the teacher's written corrective feedback on one of their writing projects. In this project, they were supposed to choose three articles related to the theme "Sustainability" and state the reasons why they thought those articles were relevant (see Appendix B). Their papers should be two or three pages. Their first drafts were given to two classmates for peer-review, and the second drafts were graded and commented by the teacher. The students were informed that they would be asked to comment on the teacher's feedback in their second drafts by using a prompt made up of three questions. They would type their comments on a piece of paper using the same format as everyone in the class and omit their names to protect their identity. They would get two extra credit points for submitting their comments. The teacher also asked for their voluntary attendance and if they had any question related to the study.

The following week, the teacher printed out the consent forms and gave them to the students to read and sign. Each of them kept one copy of the consent. They then submitted their second drafts of project one and the teacher graded them, provided feedback and returned them so they could type up their comments on my feedback. After that, the teacher collected their comments and started analyzing the data.

It is worth mentioning that after getting the teacher's feedback, the students were required to make changes so they could produce the final draft, which would be put in the final portfolio submitted by the end of the semester. They would have to go through the same procedure with the other three projects, which were parts of the final portfolio as well.

Results

Results of this study are presented in accordance with the research questions.

Research question 1: Based on teacher's written corrective feedback, what are the aspects students think they need to revise the most?

Of the thirteen students, one did not answer this question. Nine out of 12 students said that they would have to work on grammar. Seven students thought they need to work on word issues including "vocabulary," "wrong words," "the use of pronouns," "prepositions," "the number of words," "expression" and "the use of synonyms". Six students believed they need to revise MLA format, which includes the works cited page, in-text citation, quotations and the use of quotation marks. Three students said they have to focus on sentence issues such as ambiguous or confusing sentences. Three students stated they should fix transition.

Research question 2: What is some feedback of the teacher that students do not understand?

Of the thirteen students, one said she or he understood all feedback. Out of the rest, three asserted that they did not understand some comments because of the teacher's handwriting. They said that "It's a bit hard to read your comments with handwriting," "There is a few I do not (understand) just because the hand writings are not very clear" and "(I don't understand) words that are written unclearly." Three students did not understand the symbols the teacher used to indicate mistakes such as "some question marks" or "lines under some sentences." It is noted that the teacher had not explained these symbols (see Appendix A) before returning their papers. Next, two students mentioned that they did not understand my feedback such as "What do you mean?" or "Expressions aren't clear." They revealed that "I don't know how to clarify it since I don't know what aspect makes you confuse and what should I say about that" and "I can understand which expressions are not clear, but I don't understand the reasons why they aren't clear." Finally, two students said they were confused because of the conflict between the teacher's feedback and their friend's or between the teacher's feedback and the writing sample shown in class. Specifically, the teacher said the article's title should not be underlined, meanwhile, his or her friend believed that it should be. In the other case, the teacher indicated that "Work Cited" is not correct, but "Works Cited." One student asserted that in the sample, it was written as "Work Cited" so he or she did not know which way was correct.

Research question 3: What is some feedback of the teacher that students find helpful and want to get more?

Two students did not provide any information regarding this question. Of the remaining eleven students, five said that the feedback on grammar was helpful. Three students stated that all feedback was helpful. One student said before receiving the feedback, he or she thought his or her paper was perfect. Now he or she realized there were many mistakes to fix. Another disclosed that the feedback was "helpful and hurtful enough to motivate me to do better." Moreover, two students found the teacher's compliments helpful; one said the compliments encouraged him or her significantly in revising so he or she could get a better grade. Two students found the feedback on transition helpful and two wanted to receive more feedback on organization.

Research question 4: In general, what do students think of the teacher's written corrective feedback?

Most of them expressed positive comments and gratitude towards the teacher's feedback. Below is the table detailing their general comments.

Student number	Students' comments
1	Your feedback is very helpful for me; I appreciate all your work for my P1. You help me know my weakness of writing.
2	The feedback was helpful. The feedback was very detailed and pointed out almost every mistake.
3	Helpful.
4	
5	The comment from you is very clear and precise. In this class, I learn a lot about writing. Thanks for your comments sentence by sentence.
6	The instructor has done a great job. Thank you very much.
7	Thank you for helping me to fix lots of problems on my project….I saw your cautious and patient through your comments. Thanks again for teaching this semester, thank you.
8	Thank you for your feedback.
9	Basically, I'd love to receive feedback from her.
10	I really appreciated that she checked my project. She scanned it in detail, so I got great feedback. I will modify my project taking it to consideration.
11	Feedbacks were really helping and comments at the end was helpful too.
12	The feedback was clear enough….I received the feedback more positively...I believe my instructor wants me to do well. I can feel that the criticisms come from a good place. I think I should revisit the areas that have been brought up in the feedback to get the best result in the future.
13	I'm really appreciated your detail comments.

Table 1: Students' attitudes towards the teacher's feedback

In this table, the word "helpful" was used 4 times. Other positive words regarding the teacher's feedback were "detailed" (3 times), "clear" (twice), "precise," "helping," and "great." One student also said the teacher was "cautious and patient." The word "appreciate" was used three times, and the words "thank you," or "thanks" appeared six times including one student repeating them three times in his or her comments. Other comments included "I'd love to receive feedback from her" and "The instructor has done a great job."

Research question 5: What is the power relationship between students and teacher based on the teacher's written corrective feedback?

When they pointed out some issues with the feedback, they used subtle phrases such as "I'm sorry to say that, but I hope maybe you can…," "I'd like to know the reason why I should change the expression…" or "maybe some mistakes can be explained more specific" and "if you can write slower, that would be awesome." They seemed to try to be polite and did not want to hurt the teacher's feelings. This could also mean that they regarded the teacher to be a person of greater power than them so they did not want to disrespect her. Moreover, one student said "You help me to know my weakness of writing," which means he or she admitted that his or her writing still had many mistakes and he or she needed to work on that. Similarly, other students stated that "This (feedback) helps me to avoid these mistakes in the future," "Thank you for your feedback to let me realize I have so many aspects to revise" and "I think I should revisit the areas that have been brought up in the feedback to get the best results in the future." Apparently, many students saw the teacher as the authority whose feedback on their papers is correct, and they should work on the mistakes pointed out in the feedback to achieve higher scores in the upcoming papers.

Discussion

Students' Comments on Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback

The fact that students liked the teacher's feedback supports the idea proposed by Hartshorn et al. (2010) that written corrective feedback should be given to students. This also coincides with the result stated in Kang and Dykema's (2017) study, which is the students would like to receive feedback. In their study, American students used the word "helpful" 33 times to describe the feedback. When talking about feedback they did not understand, they used hedging and polite words such as "a bit" to soften the seriousness of the feedback. This shows that both American and ESL students appreciated the feedback and considered it effective in helping them improve their writing.

One difference between this study and the study of Kang and Dykema (2017) is the students in this study wrote their comments informally, while those in the other study provided more formal comments. This was because students in this study were asked to write their comments to get extra credits, while the other group of students was required to provide comments as part of the participation grade. Nevertheless, it is believed that students in this study took their comments as seriously as those in the other group. Most of them handed in long comments and tried to provide as many details as possible. Furthermore, being able to express themselves casually actually helped them to open up and write as much as they could as they were not afraid of getting a low grade on their comments. This helped to provide rich data, which benefited the study significantly.

It is worth mentioning that students in this study paid great attention to feedback regarding grammar. This is very interesting as for ESL students, grammar seemed to be a matter of great concern. This result contrasts with the idea proposed by Truscott (1996), which is grammar correction does not benefit students. Another fascinating comment is two students found the teacher's compliments really helpful. This shows that apart from appreciating mistakes pointed out by the teacher, they also valued praise, which motivated them to improve their writing. This finding shed light on the debate of whether or not positive feedback should be given along with the negative one. It is clear that positive feedback should be delivered as Christensen (1962) suggested. Moreover, students indicated that the teacher's handwriting could be difficult to read sometimes, so she should make her writing legible. One student suggested that the teacher could use the comment function on *Microsoft Office Word* to avoid this issue. Next, three students stated that they did not understand the symbols used in the feedback; the teacher should have explained these symbols clearly before letting them read the feedback. Finally, as some students did not understand the feedback on why some of their expressions were not clear or why certain sentences did not make sense, the teacher should have arranged time for them to come and talk with her individually so she could explain more and

enable them to fix those mistakes. Individual conferences can also help address issues such as the conflicting feedback between the teacher and classmates or the contrast between the teacher's feedback and the information included in in-class handouts. This idea reflects the idea of Ferris (2002) and Semke (1984), which is feedback should be two-way.

The Power Relationship between Students and the Teacher Reflected by Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis can be applied to investigate the relationship between discourse and power in teaching contexts. In this case, the "three dimensional conception of discourse" by Fairclough (1992) should be revisited. According to this author, discourse includes "text," "discursive practice" and "social practice." When the text is distributed, it is participating in the "discursive practice," during which it is also functioning as a social practice. Text can demonstrate a power relationship and allow the subordinate to speak up and seize their power.

In this study, the teacher's written corrective feedback on students' projects can be considered text or discourse; when given to students, it is performing the "discursive practice." It has the social purpose of conveying what the teacher thought were the mistakes they made or what aspects of their writing was satisfactory. Thus, feedback showed that the teacher had more power than the students. It put the students into the position of the subordinate, who were supposed to take those feedback into consideration and make changes. However, students' comments were also text. Analyzing their comments on the teacher's feedback via critical discourse analysis could help shed light into how they perceived the teacher's power over them. It also gave them the chance to disagree with the teacher and create social justice in the classroom.

In fact, students in this study regarded the teacher as a person of great power, which differs from those in the study of Kang and Dykema (2017). In their study, students remarkably challenged the teacher's authority by writing statements such as "Since I'm the author of my essay…" (p. 22), "I understood the comments fairly well, it's just following them may be difficult" (p. 21) or proposing questions including "What benefits would that (the teacher's proposed change) give my paper?" (p. 21). Nevertheless, there was hardly any questioning of the teacher's power in this study.

One of the reasons students in this study thought of the teacher as a person of much greater power than them is because they were ESL students, who tended to view themselves still as learners of English. Studying English as a second language, they usually believed that they would make mistakes. Therefore, when the teacher pinpointed the mistakes, they felt appreciative, then tried their best to work on those mistakes to improve their writing skill. This is different from students in the study of Kang and Dykema (2017). They were native speakers of English, so it is believed that they were more confident in their English competence. Another reason might come from cultures. It is noted that most of the students in this study were Asian; in their culture, teachers are people of great power so their feedback is unquestionable. For example, Garner (1989) said that the Vietnamese culture is formed based on Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, which demands everyone to respect "the king, the teacher, and the father." He also added that challenging a teacher is a sign of disrespect. In contrast, American students do not seem to have the same level of respect towards the teachers. This finding reflects the view that teachers can be in a higher position than students, which was suggested by Bartholomae (1980) Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), Saito (1994), and Zafiri (2017).

Limitations of the Study

This study only included thirteen ESL students of a freshman composition course, which is a limited number. It would have been better if more students had joined the study, as the data would have been greater and more representative. Also, different from the writing project used in the study of Kang and Dykema (2017) in which students were asked to write an argumentative essay, the project utilized to generate teacher's feedback and students' comments on the feedback in this study was different. It simply required students to find three articles and explain the reasons for choosing those articles to include in the next edition of the textbook of the course. It would have been better if the project had been argumentative as it would have yielded more reliable comparative results with the results withdrawn from Kang and Dykema (2017). Actually, there were other projects in the freshman composition class that asked students to write argumentative essays, but due to the restraint of time, data had to be collected as soon as possible for analysis. These projects did not appear till later in the semester.

Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating how ESL students perceived teacher's written corrective feedback via written comments and how those comments reflected the power relationship with the teacher. It was found that all the participants thought that teacher's feedback was effective and appreciated the feedback tremendously. Besides, they thought the teacher had a great power over them and did not challenge her authority. They welcomed the teacher's feedback and wanted to make changes in order to improve their grades and their writing.

In future studies, researchers may investigate how ESL students make changes based on the teacher's written corrective feedback. For example, by the end of the semester, the teacher can collect students' edited essays and research how much has changed. Thus, the effectiveness of the teacher's written feedback perceived by the students and the power relationship with the teacher can be further disclosed. Furthermore, there could be similar studies for each writing project that students have to write during the semester. Thus, at the end of the semester, when the final project is done, results can be compared to see if students still feel the same about the effectiveness of written corrective feedback as well as the power relationship with the teacher.

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Appendix A

Indirect Coding Symbols

D	= Determiner	S/PL	= Singular/Plural
SV	= Subject Verb Agreement	C/NC	= Count/Noncount
VF	= Verb Form	?	= Meaning is not clear
ro	= Run-on Sentence	AWK	= Awkward Wording
inc	= Incomplete Sentence	~	= Word Order
VT	= Verb Tense	C	= Capitalization
PP	= Preposition	P	= Punctuation
SPG	= Spelling	~~S~~	= Omit
WF	= Word Form	∧	= Something is missing
WC	= Word Choice	¶	= New Paragraph

(Hartshorn et al., 2010)

Appendix B

Project 1: Selecting Articles—English 110

At this point in the semester you haven't read very many of the articles included in Sustainability; however, for this first project you will need to familiarize yourself at least with the Table of Contents of the text. Look at the titles, maybe peruse first paragraphs, read the discussion questions. Try to get an idea of the kinds of topics included in the book.

For this first project of the semester, you will need to find three articles that you would argue to include in the second edition of Sustainability. You will need to then write a summary of each article (150 words at least) and a rationale for their inclusion.

There is one other requirement for the project: at least one of the three articles must be scholarly in nature and form. For example, you can use a scholarly database through the MSU Library website (ERIC, SciFinder, MLA, etc.).

In all, this project should be 2-3 pages in total.