Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository
argumentation (EA): A sociocognitive perspective


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# Abstract

Although teacher written feedback on student writing has become a central topic for second language (L2) writing research, investigations into it have mainly focused on the surface-level errors of student writing. This study, situated in the Chinese EFL context where feedback research is more limited, echoed the general call for more research addressing non-error feedback (e.g., organization and content feedback). It was informed by a sociocognitive view of teacher feedback and SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) genre pedagogy and followed Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) lead to study the feedback-and-interpretation process. Particularly, it investigated

- how feedback on expository argumentation (EA feedback) is given and processed, as reflected by the teacher's/student's decision-making thought processes, and
- the extent to which the feedback-and-interpretation process is helpful for student development.

Methodologically, the study adopted a case study approach. This approach was used because it is most suitable for answering the research questions explored in the study, that is, the "how" questions about teachers'/students' decision-making (Bowles, 2010). As a case study, it focused on three teacher-student pairs/cases (a teacher and three of her students) and lasted one semester. To get the best possible answers to research questions, it quantitatively and qualitatively analysed data obtained from think-alouds, teacher comments on student writing, student notes, and interviews (background interviews, retrospective interviews, ongoing interviews, and final interviews).

The study found that the teacher consistently provided EA feedback on supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, topic statement, topic sentences, conclusion, and overall organization and she usually used the following approaches to deliver EA feedback: problems/strengths identifications, explanations, suggestions, revisions, and a combination thereof. The study also found that the students interpreted (accepted and incorporated) EA feedback in different ways and their interpretation of EA feedback was marked by changes. Furthermore, the study found that the teacher's/students' decisions to provide/process EA feedback were formed through the workings of the their "mindbodyworld" (Atkinson, 2014). Generally speaking, the study found that the teacher-student interaction during the feedback process did

not always go very well, but it was still helpful for the students' development as writers and feedback receivers.

The study was significant in that it advanced the understanding of teacher feedback by providing a sociocognitive explanation about 1) how the teacher offers feedback, 2) how the student attends to teacher feedback, 3) how the teacher, the student, the feedback itself (as the text-level context), and the context interact with each other during the feedback process, and 4) how student learning and development occur during the feedback process. An advanced understanding of teacher feedback had pertinence not only for the Chinese EFL context, but also for other L2 contexts.

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# Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature: Bian, Xiaoyun

Date: September 10, 2018

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# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| EA | expository argumentation |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| ESL | English as a second language |
| L2 | second language |
| L1 | first language |
| RQ | research question |
| JSLW | Journal of Second Language Writing |
| LW | learning-to-write |
| WL | writing-to-learn |
| CET-4/6 | College English Test (Band 4/6) |
| W1, W2, W3 | writing assignment one/two/three |
| SFS | School of Foreign Studies |
| SFL | Systemic Functional Linguistics |
| ESP | English for Specific Purposes |
| ZPD | Zone of Proximal Development |

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction: An overview of the study and the scope of this chapter

Teacher written feedback on second language (L2) students' writing (hereinafter mainly referred to as "**teacher feedback**" for short) has been a subject of researchers' interest since the 1980s (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ferris, 2003). However, research into it has mainly focused on the surface-level errors of student writing and there has only been a small body of research addressing teacher feedback on non-error issues such as the organization and content of student writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Goldstein, 2001, 2006, 2016). My study directed its attention to non-error feedback and prioritized Chinese EFL (English-as-a-Foreign-Language) teachers' **feedback on the argumentation-related issues in expository writing** (hereinafter referred to as "**EA feedback**" for short, e.g., teacher feedback on supporting evidence). By focusing on EA feedback and defining teacher feedback from a sociocognitive perspective, my study aimed to present a comprehensive picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process and report teacher/student evaluations of this process. Specifically, the following three research questions (hereinafter referred to as "**RQ**s" for short) were addressed in my study:

- RQ1: When writing feedback, how does the Chinese EFL teacher decide what EA concerns to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback?
- RQ2: When processing the teacher's EA feedback, how does the Chinese EFL student decide the extent to which it is accepted and incorporated?
- RQ3: According to the student and the teacher, to what extent does the teacher-student interaction through EA feedback help the students improve, if the interaction is considered effective?

This introductory chapter provides an orientation to my study. It begins with my statement of the research problem (1.1). Then, the practical, theoretical, and empirical rationales for my study are explained (1.2.1, 1.2.2, and 1.2.3). Following these rationales that motivated my study is a description of the research methodology (1.3), an explanation of the significance of my research (1.4), and an outline of the organization of my thesis and the composition of chapters (1.5).

## 1.1 Problem statement

In the context of L2 writing instruction, the provision of written feedback continues to be an activity widely practised by teachers (Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 2003). From the perspective of teachers, they usually do not feel that they have done justice to students' writing efforts until they have written substantial comments on students' papers (Hyland, 2003). Many teachers often spend more time providing feedback than preparing for or conducting classroom sessions (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

Sharing this central concern of teachers, L2 scholars have done a great deal of thinking and research about teacher feedback since the 1980s. This can be seen by the emergence of a large number of published books that are wholly or partially devoted to teacher feedback over the past four decades (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ferris, 2003, 2013; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Goldstein, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b; Lee, 2017; Manchón & Matsuda, 2016; Silva & Matsuda, 2001). Moreover, according to Murphy and de Larios (2010, p. i), over 85% of the manuscripts received by *the Journal of Second Language Writing (JSLW)* from 2007 to 2010 dealt with the topic of feedback. Certainly, these manuscripts might be concerned with different types of feedback (e.g., teacher feedback, peer feedback, self-feedback, teacher-student conference); but as teacher feedback is a persistent teacher practice, there must be a high percentage of these manuscripts pertinent to it. Furthermore, in *the JSLW*, teacher feedback has become one of the most accessed topics by graduate students (Tardy, 2014). In general, investigating L2 teachers' feedback has already been established as an important area of inquiry (Silva, Thomas, Park, & Zhang, 2014).

Despite the general recognition of the importance of teacher feedback, there are two notable issues that merit immediate attention in the arena of teacher feedback. First, the term *"teacher written feedback"* has not yet been clearly defined (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). By reviewing feedback literature, it can be found that since the publication of Truscott's 1996 controversial and compelling article that harshly criticized teachers' corrections of linguistic errors in student writing (i.e., error/corrective feedback), error feedback has received so much of researchers' attention that "teacher response to errors is more commonly referred to now as

feedback" (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1136). The following example illustrates how teacher feedback is often understood as error feedback. When Zhang, Yan, and Liu (2015) reviewed the research presentations that appeared at an international conference on English language teaching, they only reported error feedback studies presented at that conference. However, the online conference program indicated that there were presentations of studies on non-error feedback at that conference. So, it is evident in this example that Zhang, Yan, and Liu tacitly equated "teacher feedback" with "error/corrective feedback" and used these two terms interchangeably.

Second, studies on teacher feedback mainly cover issues about the surface-level errors of student writing and few have thoroughly studied non-error feedback on content and organization issues. According to Goldstein (2001), since Zamel's (1985) first study about content-focused feedback, as of 2001 there were only 15 readily available studies on "text-level feedback" (i.e., feedback on content and rhetoric, Goldstein, 2006, p. 185). Indeed, in the years that followed (2001-present), published feedback research focusing on "text-level feedback" has remained sparse. In 2006, Goldstein concluded once again: "a small body of research has developed addressing issues pertaining to teacher feedback and revision at the text level" (p. 185). Today, published feedback research beyond surface errors continues to be far from adequate (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Goldstein, 2016).

Certainly, researchers' attention to error feedback is deserved. According to Manchón (2011), one purpose of L2 writing is to learn the language. As such, researchers' attention to error feedback can help L2 teachers deal with the linguistic accuracy of student writing and promote students' language acquisition. However, researchers' strong interest in error feedback does not mean that research into non-error "text-level" feedback is unimportant and unnecessary. As a matter of fact, there is a need for an extensive and thorough investigation of non-error feedback. Two reasons can explain this point. First, when L2 students' writing practice occurs, it also serves the purpose of learning to master writing skills and competence in dealing with issues beyond the level of language (i.e., learning-to-write; Manchón, 2011). Accordingly, research on non-error feedback will provide L2 writing teachers with important insights regarding how to help students achieve the goals of learning-to-write and build writing abilities. Second, there is empirical evidence that, in some situations, as

many as 85% of teachers' comments were focused on students' ideas and organization (e.g., Ferris, 1997; Ferris, et al., 1997). As such, L2 teachers need research on non-error feedback to help them improve their responding practices.

In brief, it is worthwhile exploring L2 teachers' written feedback empirically. As to the research, there are two urgent concerns for researchers to address:

1) the conceptual problem associated with the term *"teacher written feedback"*; and
2) the paucity of research into non-error feedback.

My study provides a remedy for these two major problems in feedback research.

## 1.2 The practical, empirical, and theoretical rationales behind my study

This section explains the rationales behind my study under three headings: practical rationales, theoretical rationales, and fivefold empirical rationales.

### Practical rationales: Personal responding experience

The practical impetus for my study came from my previous first-hand experiences of providing written feedback on the expository writing produced by Chinese EFL first- and second-year university students. What follows is a description of how my previous responding experience motivated me to do this study.

Before I left to pursue my doctoral study in New Zealand, I had already taught *"College English"* in China for about ten years. In China, *"College English"* is a compulsory, integrated skills course offered by almost every university during the students' freshman and sophomore years. To complete this course and receive credit, apart from reading, speaking, and listening skills, my students (generally with low or mid-intermediate English proficiency of a level corresponding to IELTS scores around 5.0-5.5) needed to demonstrate that they had gained good control over expository writing.

In the Chinese EFL educational context, English expository writing is the genre most frequently learnt and used (Zhang, 2000). It requires student writers to clearly, coherently, and concisely expound on an idea for their readers in English. To help my students acquire the skills to handle the exposition genre when I was teaching in

China, I spent a lot of time responding to their expository writing. As my students had great trouble formulating and developing arguments, I usually wrote many comments on the following EA-related problems exhibited in their work: unsupported ideas, lack of/inappropriate topic sentences, incoherent and illogical argumentation, and the traditional four-step (i.e., beginning, developing, turning, and integration) Chinese way of writing (Chen, 2002). At that time (and now), I firmly believed that it was necessary to write EA comments. I felt, in relation to difficult EA-related issues, students needed individualized, tailor-made guidance and instruction/feedback. Without it, it was difficult for them to realize what their problems were, and it was difficult for them to understand clearly how to improve the argumentation quality of their expositions.

However, although I was eager to provide my students with EA feedback, my responding practice at that time was bound up with doubts and questions. First, I felt uncertain about whether my EA feedback was well understood and well accepted by my students. Second, I was not clear about how my communication with students via feedback could be better established. To reduce my uncertainty and clear up my confusion, I consulted several journal articles about feedback. However, after reading them, I still felt puzzled. In fact, since the term "*feedback*" was vaguely defined or even undefined in most cases, for a long time, I did not realize that corrective feedback only addresses language and grammar errors and it does not address issues of content or organisation (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Meanwhile, as most studies viewed feedback merely as corrective information a teacher presented on student writing rather than two-way communication between the teacher and the student, the studies I had previously read did not show me what I had expected and did not serve my needs and interests very well.

Overall, the doubts and questions that stemmed from my feedback practices triggered my decision to add new elements to the existing literature about non-error feedback. Taking my own questions as prompts, I decided to pursue a study that
1) focuses on non-error EA feedback,
2) defines the term "*teacher written feedback*" at length,
3) presents a comprehensive understanding of teacher-student communication during feedback, and
4) looks at the effectiveness of teacher-student communication via EA feedback.

**Theoretical rationales: Sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy**

Theoretically, my study was based on Atkinson's (2002, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014) sociocognitive theory of learning and development and the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)-informed genre pedagogy. The theoretical rationales for the study I carried out for this thesis are clarified below.

First, my study drew on Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development to understand teacher feedback. Similar to sociocultural theory, Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development emphasizes the role of ecosocial interaction in cognitive development too. With regards to the ecosocial (combined ecological and social) interaction, sociocognitive theory does not limit it to the interaction between human beings alone; it acknowledges that it also occurs between humans and their non-human environments (including both the physical/ecological setting and social contexts, Atkinson, 2011). Furthermore, using the inseparability, adaptivity, and alignment principles, sociocognitive theory offers an explanation about what happens when humans, and humans and their ecosocial environment interact and how human cognition develops in the interactions. This theoretical position is particularly useful for understanding teacher feedback because it sheds light on 1) how the teacher offers feedback, 2) how the student attends to teacher feedback, 3) how the teacher, the student, the feedback itself (as the text-level context), and the environments/contexts interact with each other during the feedback process, and 4) how student learning and development occur during the feedback process.

Moreover, my study drew on Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development to raise RQs. As mentioned above, Atkinson's sociocognitive theory gives centrality to "ecosocial interaction" and "cognition" and their inseparability. Informed by this theory, my study investigated teacher-student communication via feedback (ecosocial interaction), teachers'/students' decision-making thought processes during feedback (cognitive processing), and the helpfulness of the feedback process for student development (cognitive development). That is to say, the RQs investigated in my study were well supported theoretically because they were consistent with Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development that places emphasis on interaction and cognition.

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Second, the SFL-informed genre pedagogy provided a theoretical rationale for my study because it acknowledges that both feedback and EA feedback occupy an important place in teaching and learning, which, as a result, points to the necessity to study feedback and EA feedback. Briefly, the SFL-informed genre pedagogy emphasizes the importance of teachers' "intervention" towards students' awareness of target genres and the development of their genre knowledge (Hyland, 2007). The implication derives from this is that teacher feedback is important, since it is a type of teacher intervention which offers teachers and students good opportunities to explore various genre-related issues together and helps students develop their genre knowledge and ability. Moreover, SFL-informed genre pedagogy particularly emphasizes the importance of EA feedback. According to genre theorists (e.g., Hyland, 2007), L2 students are unfamiliar with how to generalize, organize, and argue for ideas when writing expositions or arguments. That is to say, SFL-informed genre pedagogy acknowledges the importance of L2 teachers' intervention/feedback surrounding the argumentation-related issues in students' expository or argumentative writing. Clearly, the importance genre pedagogy attaches to teacher feedback and EA feedback provided a powerful theoretical justification for carrying out this study.

**Fivefold empirical rationales**

Apart from the paucity of research on non-error feedback, the empirical rationale behind my study is fivefold.

First, my study followed a new research trend. Over the past 40 years, 1) student perspectives on teacher feedback, 2) the feedback itself, 3) teacher cognition, and 4) the feedback-and-revision process have become the important trends in feedback research. However, Hyland and Hyland (2006a) launched a new, important line of research by investigating the negotiation process during which teachers construct feedback and students interpret that feedback (i.e., the feedback-and-interpretation process). One important reason why this process deserves attention is because, when the writing is returned to the students with comments, it is impossible for them to move on to revision without processing or interpreting teacher feedback first. Thus, investigating the feedback-and-interpretation process can lead to a better

understanding of the feedback-and-revision dynamic. My study, following Hyland and Hyland's lead, investigated **the feedback-and-interpretation process**. Due to the importance of the feedback-and-interpretation process, it is apparently necessary to expand the repertoire of this line of research.

Second, my study about teacher-student communication via EA feedback and its helpfulness echoed Knoblauch and Brannon's (1981) and Goldstein's (2016) suggestion to study "the larger conversation between teacher and student" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981, p.1). So far, the research area concerning teacher feedback on L2 writing is still an emerging field. For this reason, it is important for researchers to holistically study it and devote attention to the feedback-and-response process. By holistically looking at the feedback process and its helpfulness, a study, like the current one, ensures that teacher feedback can be better understood as a whole and that the research into it is worthwhile.

Third, my study expanded the understanding of the feedback-and-interpretation process by providing evidence from the Chinese EFL educational context. Currently, feedback research, such as Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) study, is mainly focused on ESL students' academic expository writing and on the United States (Goldstein, 2016). As such, my study, situated in **the Chinese EFL setting** and focusing on **non-academic expository writing**, could complement the findings mainly obtained in the ESL academic expository context.

Fourth, my study answered Goldstein's (2016) call to conduct in-depth investigations. According to Goldstein (2016), many important questions related to teacher feedback still have not been thoroughly addressed within any one particular context or across contexts. These questions include what teachers choose to comment on and why they decide to do so, and how and why students make decisions regarding the use of teacher feedback (Goldstein, 2016). My study examined how teachers decide on their feedback focus and feedback delivery approaches when constructing EA feedback. Also, it investigated how students make decisions regarding their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback. Devoting attention to these in-depth **"how" questions about decision-making** can contribute greatly to a deeper understanding of teacher feedback.

Finally, but also importantly, my study echoes Ferris' (2001) call that feedback researchers need to launch precise investigations. For example, my study investigated teachers' decision-making thought processes when they provide EA feedback (RQ1). To be precise in the ways that feedback research is conducted, my study precisely pinned down the behaviors involved in the teacher's feedback-providing process. According to Huot (2002), teachers' provision of feedback includes two essential procedures: reading a student's text and adding comments to it. Building on an awareness of these two procedures, my study chose to explore the decision-making process the teacher is involved in **when he/she is adding notes to students' texts**. The major reason for making this choice was that teachers may still need to read student' text while adding notes to it and thus the process of adding notes to students' texts may be more cognitively complicated. That is to say, at the comments-adding procedure, it is possible that richer data can be generated; and, hence, my study is worth the effort.

## 1.3 Overview of research methodology

My study used a case study approach to conducting research. Generally, there are two main reasons why this approach was best suited to the current study. Firstly, according to Yin (2014), the case study approach offers rich possibilities for a holistic, in-depth, and longitudinal investigation of a single individual or entity (or a few individuals or entities). As mentioned above, my study aimed to present a comprehensive picture of teacher-student conversations during the feedback-and-interpretation process through an in-depth study. Thus, there was a good fit between the methodology and the aim of my study. Secondly, the case study approach is most suitable for answering the RQs addressed in my study. As introduced in Section 1.2, teachers/students' decision-making thought processes were thoroughly investigated in my study. According to Schramm, the case study approach can "illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (as cited in Yin, 2014, p. 12). In this sense, this case study approach was tailor-made for my study.

Aligned to the case study approach that supports longitudinal investigation, my study lasted one semester (18 weeks). According to case study methodologists, when conducting a longitudinal case study, there is an opportunity "to use many different sources of evidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 114), such as "interview data, narrative accounts, classroom observations, verbal reports, and written documents" (McKay, 2006, p. 71). My study collected document data (commented student writing and students' notes), think-aloud data (the participants' verbal report about what they were thinking while the teacher was providing feedback and the students were interpreting teacher feedback), and data from interviews (background interview, retrospective interview, ongoing interview, and final interview) to ensure data richness. My study processed data from two perspectives. The data obtained from different sources were analysed not only qualitatively but also quantitatively.

## 1.4 Significance of the study

My study contributed to the literature on L2 feedback and writing in several ways.

Theoretically, my study advanced the understanding of teacher feedback by providing a sociocognitive explanation about 1) how the teacher offers feedback, 2) how the student attends to teacher feedback, 3) how the teacher, the student, the feedback itself (as the text-level context), and the context interact with each other during the feedback process, and 4) how student learning and development occur during the feedback process. Meanwhile, my study, from the perspective of teacher feedback, offered a clearer view of the role teachers and students play in classrooms that adopt a genre-based approach. To some extent, it enriched our understanding of genre pedagogy as well.

Empirically, the empirical rationales behind my study indicate that the current study was significant in its expansion of the current limited research base, its extension of the line of research into the feedback-and-interpretation process, its depth of investigation, and its purposeful choice of research foci. Moreover, it provided a point of departure for future inquiry since it highlighted that a variety of basic feedback issues need researchers' further attention and efforts. For example, teachers'/students' decision-making thought process is a topic of inquiry that

deserves further empirical substantiation. An investigation into it can expose the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains of teacher feedback and may uncover more of its inseparability and complexity. Moreover, based on my study, researchers can continue to conduct studies in various contexts.

Practically, given that the existing studies on feedback are mainly conducted in the ESL academic writing class settings and most findings are not readily applicable to EFL undergraduate learners, my research widened the scope of data by investigating teachers and students from the non-academic EFL writing context and offered pedagogical implications for EFL teachers working in China or in educational settings similar to China. My study could assist EFL teachers in gaining a deeper insight into teacher feedback and developing a sound understanding of their feedback beliefs and practices.

## 1.5 Thesis organization: An overview

This thesis consists of eight chapters. This chapter has introduced the research problem, provided rationales for the research, and presented the research methodology and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 examines the literature related to my study and provides further explanation of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks my study built upon. It mainly argues that it is necessary to extend the EA feedback research base by investigating the feedback-and-interpretation process and explains the reasons behind the choices of research foci (e.g., teacher/student decision-making). Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology. It introduces and justifies the case study research design of my study and provides information related to participants, research context, research instruments, data-collecting process, and data analysis. Chapters 4 to 6 present research findings about RQ1 (Chapter 4), RQ2 (Chapter 5), and RQ3 (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 provides an empirical and theoretical discussion of the results of each RQ. This thesis ends with Chapter 8, which reviews the main findings of my study, presents its contributions to existing knowledge, provides some pedagogical recommendations, acknowledges the limitations, and offers suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2 Literature review

## 2.0 Introduction

According to Bitchener (2010), a thesis literature review needs to review non-research literature, theoretical perspectives, and empirical research literature respectively, and its central aims are to provide an in-depth account of the background literature and to justify the "why", the "what", and sometimes even the "how" of a study. Following Bitchener's guide, the main body of this chapter reviews the non-research literature (2.1), theoretical perspectives (2.2), and empirical research literature (2.3) related to L2 teachers' written feedback in turn. This literature review provides the comprehensive, theoretical, and empirical contexts within which my RQs arose. It justifies why my study focused on non-error EA issues and why it investigated the feedback-and-interpretation process (from the perspective of cognitive processing) and its helpfulness for student development in the Chinese EFL expository writing context. At the end of this chapter, how the three specific RQs addressed in my study were generated is explained (2.4).

## 2.1 Non-research literature review: By chronological order of development

This section chronologically reviews the seminal non-research works published in the field of L2 writing during the period from the 1980s, when the quest to understand teacher feedback started, through to the present day. This chronological review lays out a comprehensive background for my study. It enables four issues surrounding teacher feedback to emerge:

1) the importance of non-error feedback,
2) L2 students' need for argumentation-related feedback,
3) the conceptualization/theorization of teacher written feedback, and
4) the necessity for conducting feedback research in the EFL contexts.

The emergence of these issues justifies

1) why my study focused on non-error EA feedback,
2) why my study developed a theoretical consideration of teacher feedback, and
3) why my study was conducted in the EFL contexts.

*The 1980s: The origins of non-error feedback in the L2 writing contexts*

In the 1980s, as L2 writing as an area of inquiry was still in its early stage, there were relatively few studies and publications on teacher feedback (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008). The frequently cited book *Composing in a Second Language,* edited by McKay (1984), indicates a number of key issues related to L2 teachers' feedback during the period from 1980 to 1989.

In this book for L2 writing teachers, one third of it is devoted to teacher feedback, among which two articles pertain to L1 and L2 teachers' error feedback and one article pertains to L1 teachers' feedback on various issues of student writing. These three articles are organized in a section titled *"Evaluating"*.

From McKay's (1984) selection of articles and the section title she used, the following implications related to L2 teachers' written feedback in the 1980s can be drawn out. First, as indicated by the fact that one third of the volume is dedicated to teacher feedback, teacher feedback had already been considered as an important issue in the L2 writing contexts in the 1980s. Second, as the section title "*Evaluating*" suggests, McKay used "teacher feedback" and "teacher evaluation" synonymously. This indicates the existence of terminological confusion at that time. According to Reid (1993), these two terms must be distinguished, since teacher response was not always evaluative. Third, considering this book contains two articles about error feedback and one article about teacher feedback on various issues, it can be said that McKay distinguished error correction from teacher feedback but gave more attention to error correction. Fourth, work on L2 teachers' non-error feedback in the 1980s seems to be sparse. This generalization is made because a research article about L1 teachers' non-error feedback was selected for this book about L2 writing. In fact, in the 1980s, as research on L2 writing was still rather limited, L2 writing researchers and teachers generally took L1 research as their researching and responding guides (Ferris, 2003).

*The 1990s: Recognition of the differences between L1 and L2 students*

A number of books related to L2 writing were published in the 1990s (e.g., Kroll, 1990; Leki, 1992; Reid, 1993; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). Tracking the major publications on L2 writing that appeared from 1990 to 1999 reveals the following

main trends and issues related to teacher feedback in this decade. First, during the 1990s, teacher feedback continued to be an important topic. The contents of the major L2 writing literature published in this decade point to this conclusion. For example, the frequently-cited collection *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom* edited by Kroll (1990) includes three articles about teacher feedback (i.e., Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Leki, 1990). In Ferris and Hedgcock's (1998, reprinted in 2005 and 2014) book, the authors reinforced the importance of teacher feedback by stating: "Teacher response to student writing is important at all levels and in all instructional contexts" (p. 147).

Second, as in the 1980s, error feedback in the 1990s received greater amount of attention. In these ten years, error feedback was usually analysed and discussed in a separate chapter of a book, instead of being made part of a chapter (e.g., Leki, 1992; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). According to Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), there had already been extensive examination of error correction in the field of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) writing, but little discussion on feedback beyond error correction had taken place from the 1980s to the late 1990s.

Moreover, during the 1990s, terminology was still problematic. On the one hand, L2 writing authors either did not define what feedback was in their books (e.g., Leki, 1992; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998); or they just followed their L1 peers (e.g., Reid, 1993), defining it simply as "any input from reader to writer that provides information for revision" (Keh, 1990, p. 294). On the other hand, some publications began to paint a complex picture of feedback. According to the suggestions made by Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), Leki (1992), and Reid (1993), feedback should be understood in combination with classroom contexts, teacher roles, students' writing intentions, feedback purposes, course goals, and grading procedures, to name a few. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) also pointed out that teacher feedback was a form of interpersonal communication.

Most importantly, in the 1990s, a clear recognition of the differences between L1 and L2/ESL student writers began to emerge. According to Silva (1993), L2 students differed from L1 students in that they had different organizational preferences and used different approaches to manage argumentations, to create connection, to cite,

and to attract readers. Leki (1992) particularly stressed the necessity to consider student differences when discussing teacher feedback. She pointed out that, because of the differences between L1 and L2 students, ESL teachers needed to be more open-minded and flexible when responding to L2 students' expository and argumentative writing.

### *The 2000s: More attention to non-error feedback and deeper thinking on it*

In the 2000s, there was a remarkable growth in publications about L2 writing (e.g., Casanave, 2004; Kroll, 2003; Hyland, 2002, 2003, 2004; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Silva & Matsuda, 2001; Williams, 2005). Meanwhile, books focusing exclusively on teacher feedback appeared during this 10-year period (e.g., Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). A review of the fast-growing number of literature about L2 writing and teacher feedback indicates that, in this decade, L2 scholars began to devote more attention to non-error feedback. For instance, most chapters of Ferris' (2003) work either delve deeply into or at least touch upon the issue of content and organization feedback. Goldstein (2005) published a book devoted exclusively to feedback on content and organization. The book edited by Hyland and Hyland (2006b) also focuses on non-error feedback, since it includes only one article focusing on error feedback. However, in their books, Ferris (2003) preferred using the term "teacher response/feedback" while Goldstein favoured the words "teacher written commentary" to refer to non-error feedback. This indicates that the terminology still needed clarification in this decade.

Generally, Goldstein's (2005) and Hyland and Hyland's (2006b) works both moved the understanding of feedback to a deeper level. Goldstein (2005) did not simply look at the feedback itself, but approached it from a complex, contextualised, social perspective. According to Goldstein, teacher feedback should be conceptualised as a non-linear feedback-and-revision process in which the teacher factors, the student factors, and the contextual factors interact with each other in a complex way. Hyland and Hyland (2006b) offered a similar perspective of feedback in their work believing it should be viewed in a contextualised way and that every act of feedback involved a complex interaction among the teacher, the student, the contexts, and the feedback itself.

***From 2010 to present: Theorization and more concerns with EFL contexts***

Since 2010, the number of publications on L2 writing and teacher feedback has increased dramatically (e.g., Andrade & Evans, 2013; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ferris, 2013; Lee, 2017; Manchón, 2011, 2012; Manchón & Matsuda, 2016; Polio, 2017; Silvia & Matsuda, 2010). These works share the following similarities and differences with the works published in the previous three decades.

In a similar fashion, the popularity of teacher feedback has not changed in the 2000s. Although many of the recent publications (e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Lee, 2017; Polio, 2017) are interested in other sources or types of feedback as well (e.g., peer response, teacher-student conference), the written mode of teacher feedback remains central in the major literature on L2 writing and feedback. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2014), the importance of teacher written feedback, as "a critical, non-negotiable aspect of writing instruction" (p. 237), remains constant in the field of L2 writing over time.

Another similar conclusion that can be arrived at is concerned with authors' or editors' increasing attention on non-error feedback. The handbook co-edited by Manchón and Matsuda (2016) about L2 and foreign language writing treats error and non-error feedback equally by addressing these two issues respectively in two chapters. Lee (2017) also pointed out some attention had been shifted away from language feedback to content and organization feedback with the introduction of process pedagogy in L2 writing contexts. Furthermore, since 2010, there has been a development of the L2 writing theories. The learning-to-write (LW) perspective Manchón (2011) created for L2 writing establishes a theoretical foundation for emphasizing non-error feedback. According to Manchón, apart from language learning, L2 writing also serves the purpose of learning-to-write (i.e., learning to master writing skills and competence in dealing with issues beyond the level of language). So, from the perspective of LW, teacher feedback on non-error feedback will help writing students achieve the goals of learning to write and building writing abilities.

As in previous decades, the definitions of teacher feedback offered in the most recent books are still problematic. Still, it is either treated as a simple term, or considered as a complicated construct. For example, Andrade and Evans (2013) continued to follow Keh (1990) and defined it as "any input from reader to writer that provides information to revision" (p. 294). In contrast, Lee (2014, 2017) developed a much deeper theoretical view of feedback. By drawing on sociocultural theory (mediated learning experience and activity theory), Lee conceptualized feedback as a mediating activity system which emphasized its components such as contextual factors, roles of teachers and student writers, and feedback purposes.

Even with these similarities, there exists a notable difference between the prior and latest publications. Recently, L2 writing specialists have begun to consider the distinctiveness of the EFL writing and responding contexts and give more attention to feedback on EFL students' writing (Lee, 2016). As a simple example, in 2016, the *Handbook of second and foreign language writing* edited by Manchón and Matsuda was published. As the book title suggests, in recent years, (E)SL and (E)FL writing are valued equally. Certainly, compared with the discussion and investigation related to the ESL contexts, more literature on the EFL contexts is still needed.

***Summary of Section 2.1: About the non-research literature review***

From the body of L2 writing and feedback literature that has been reviewed in this section, we can make the following generalizations:

1) L2 teachers' error feedback and non-error feedback are both important, but scholars' attention to non-error feedback is still insufficient (see the above discussion of each decade);
2) Based on L1 and L2 writers' differences, argumentation-related feedback deserves attention since it matches L2 writers' uniqueness (see the above discussion of the 1990s);
3) The interests and needs of teachers working in EFL contexts need to be served (see the above discussion of the 2000s); and
4) It is time to offer a definition of what is meant by "*teacher written feedback*" (see the above discussion of each decade).

In short, a review of the non-research literature justifies the necessity for conducting feedback studies, like the one I did, which 1) focus on non-error, argumentation-related issues, 2) occur in the EFL writing context, and 3) give a sophisticated definition of what is meant by "teacher written feedback". To better define what

teacher written feedback means, the theoretical perspectives related to it are to be reviewed in the section that follows (Section 2.2)

## 2.2 Review of theoretical perspectives: On teacher feedback and its importance

Section 2.2 takes up the theoretical issues and reviews the theoretical perspectives on teacher feedback. As it is not possible to conduct a study about teacher feedback without examining what it is and pointing out its importance, this section reviews 1) perspectives on teacher feedback and 2) theories related to the importance of teacher feedback respectively (2.2.1 and 2.2.2).

Specifically, in Section 2.2.1, six perspectives on teacher feedback are reviewed and discussed, including

1) a product-oriented textual perspective,
2) a contextualized perspective,
3) a social-oriented perspective,
4) a sociocultural perspective (teacher feedback as scaffolding),
5) an activity theory perspective, and
6) a sociocognitive perspective.

This section argues, by using Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development to view teacher feedback, we can provide a fuller, more insightful account of its basic elements (including teachers, students, contexts, student writing, teacher feedback, and student learning and development) and their interactions.

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, Manchón (2011) distinguished two perspectives on L2 writing: learning-to-write (LW) dimension and writing-to-learn-language/content (WL) dimension. From the LW perspective, non-error feedback is considered theoretically important and, hence, it is worthy of investigation. Section 2.2.2 further justifies the importance of teacher feedback and EA feedback by reviewing literature from the perspective of pedagogical development. It begins from a product-oriented pedagogy, then moves to process-oriented and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)-informed genre pedagogy. This section reveals that, with the development of writing pedagogies, there is a recognition of the importance of non-error feedback and argumentation-related feedback. This review consolidates

the importance of conducting research on non-error feedback in general and argumentation-related feedback in particular.

### 2.2.1 A review of perspectives on teacher feedback

As mentioned above, six perspectives on teacher feedback are to be reviewed and discussed in this section. It argues that teacher feedback can be better understood when grounded in Atkinson's (2002, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014) sociocognitive theory of learning and development.

### 2.2.1.1 Teacher written feedback: The product-oriented, textual perspective

Although teacher feedback has been a subject of considerable interest to researchers and teachers for several decades, few studies have conducted an explicit and thorough conceptual analysis of what is meant by it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As shown in Section 2.1, in the field of L2 writing, the most often-quoted definition of teacher feedback is made by English L1 scholar Keh (1990), who defined it from a product-oriented perspective and considered it as "any input from reader to writer that provides information for revision" (p. 294). Furthermore, as mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, due to researchers' interest in error feedback, teacher response to errors is often referred to as teacher feedback. Generally, these typical definitions that have gained acceptance mainly focus on the feedback outcome and conceptualize its textual aspects.

Undoubtedly, to clarify what teacher feedback is, it is necessary to conceptualize its textual properties. However, comparing with taking a narrow view of teacher feedback as error correction, it seems much more adequate to define teacher feedback from a broad perspective and consider that it addresses the content of student writing, the way in which ideas in writing are organized, the appropriateness of words and phrases, and so on (van Beuningen, 2010). After all, teachers may comment both on and beyond errors when providing feedback. Fiona Hyland (1998) too supports the idea that it is more appropriate to broadly define feedback, stating:

> *…discussion with the students… revealed that they considered all interventions on their text as feedback and did not differentiate them when using feedback to revise their essays. The teacher protocols also revealed that teachers dealt with both meaning and grammar related issues at the same time, when responding to the student. (p. 261)*

Although it seems fair to consider that teacher feedback covers both error and non-error responses, conceptualizing teacher feedback only by what issues it focuses on is still inadequate. This is because, apart from feedback foci, teacher feedback has other characteristics. According to Goldstein (2005), teacher feedback can be identified with various features, including "tones (praise, criticism, neutral tone), directness (direct, hedged), function (ask for information, provide information, provide instruction, ask for revision, etc.), linguistic form (question, statement, imperative, etc.), and text specificity (text specific, not-text specific)" (p. 138).

However, even if the foci and various features of teacher feedback are all pointed out, as thinking about teacher feedback evolves, scholars (e.g., Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011) have suggested that conceptualizing teacher feedback by only considering the textual features of the product is not sufficient. This is because this product-oriented way of seeing teacher feedback "provides only a brief glimpse" (Ferris, 2003, p. 3) of it and it is "contextually disembodied" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a, p. 212). Eddgington (2005) also pointed out responding to student writing is not only a textual act, but also a contextual act; and teachers' provision of feedback is influenced by classroom experiences, their relationships with students and other contextual factors. In fact, since the early 1990s, scholars have discussed teacher feedback from a contextualized perspective, which is to be reviewed in the following sub-section.

**2.2.1.2 Teacher written feedback: The contextualized perspective**

Since the early 1990s, scholars have argued that teacher feedback does not operate in a vacuum, but within complex contexts. According to Leki (1992), teacher feedback should be looked at in combination with classroom settings, course goals, and grading procedures. In Reid's (1994) view, without information like teacher-student communication in class, it is inappropriate to label teacher feedback simply as appropriation. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) situated their discussion of teacher feedback within a wider contextualized perspective. They emphasized that examinations of the relationship between teacher comments and student revisions must take into account the contexts within which the comments and revisions take place.

In more recent years, scholars further advanced this contextualized perspective on teacher feedback and began to think about it more systematically. Goldstein (2005) distinguished four levels of contexts (classroom, institution, program, and sociopolitical forces) and claimed that those layered contexts must be considered when a teacher decides how best to provide feedback. Hyland and Hyland (2006b) defined macro- and micro-levels of contexts, which cover the wider sociocultural context, the institutional context, the social/interpersonal context, and the immediate textual context (e.g., feedback delivery approaches). Apart from the classroom context and institutional context, Ferris (2003) and Goldstein (2006) also highlighted the influence of writing contexts (e.g., genre and text type of writing tasks) on the provision and use of teacher feedback.

Generally, scholars have provided different lists of influencing contextual factors. It seems that they are structured and systematically operate at the macro-level (e.g., sociocultural context), the meso-level (e.g., school and institutional context), and the micro-level (e.g., classroom context; textual context; writing context). Furthermore, Goldstein (2006) pointed out it is the interaction between these layered contextual factors that shapes teacher comments and student revisions. According to Goldstein, the values of the institutions within which teachers and students teach and learn are inevitably transmitted to the program and classroom where writing is taught, and then it continues to be transmitted to the students. For example, in a school where there is support for provision of content and rhetoric feedback, teachers may provide more feedback on content and rhetorical issues; and then teacher feedback becomes the pathway along which the values of the school are transmitted to the students. In Goldstein's view, it is the interactive influence of the institutional, programmatic, and instructional contexts that helps to explain how teacher feedback on content and rhetorical issues is given and dealt with by students.

Furthermore, Goldstein (2006) acknowledged the dynamic nature of these contextual factors. She claimed that it is necessary to identify and distinguish contextual factors that "are quite open to modification or change" and contextual factors that "are largely impervious to any modification or change" (p. 15). For example, Goldstein considered that the institution and programs' attitudes toward student populations are

usually not readily modified and they may influence the programs such as the class size or the exit requirements.

Tracing the development of this contextualized view of teacher feedback, we can see that it has begun to manifest a certain degree of maturity. To some extent, it can explain how teachers provide feedback (by taking contextual factors into account). As seen in the above example, when the school supports teachers' provision of content and rhetoric feedback, it is possible that teachers may change their preference for providing error feedback and mainly give content and rhetoric feedback. However, dwelling on this contextualized view of teacher feedback is still not sufficient. This is because Goldstein (2001) points out that the interactive and social dimensions of teacher feedback should not be ignored either.

### 2.2.1.3 Teacher written feedback: The social-oriented perspective

Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing number of feedback researchers (e.g., Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006; Lee & Schallert, 2008a, 2008b) who either suggest taking or have already taken a social-oriented view on teacher feedback in their book or research. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998, 2005, 2014) argued that "when responding to a student's text (whether orally or in writing), it is helpful to think of teacher feedback as the continuation of a dialogue between reader and writer" (1998, p. 132). Goldstein (2001), Hyland and Hyland (2006b), and Lee (2014, 2016, 2017) similarly pointed out that the traditional, simple (product-oriented) understanding of teacher feedback ignored a complex, non-linear, interactive process. That is to say, to approach teacher feedback, it is necessary to consider it as a system that consists of both the feedback process and the feedback product and to include in its definition a conceptualization of a complex, dynamic interactive process.

In general, this social-oriented, complex trend of looking at teacher feedback broadens the perspectives and adds depth to the discussion of it. To some extent, it reflects the increasing influence of the sociocultural theory of learning and development on L2 writing. In the following sub-sections, how teacher feedback is viewed within theoretical frameworks is reviewed.

**2.2.1.4 Teacher written feedback: The sociocultural perspective**

The sociocultural theory of learning and development is a theory of mind first developed by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian child psychologist in the 1920s. Basically, this theory views "learning as a mediated process in which the individual develops as they interact with the environment" (Loewen & Reinders, 2011, p. 157). According to Villamil and Guerrero (2006), what is central to this theory is that "higher forms of thinking and the ability to perform certain complex skills originate in and are shaped by social interaction" (p. 24). Under sociocultural theory, social interaction does not mean that the learner merely benefits from processing the information exchanged from others alone; it emphasizes that both humans and artefacts participate in the social interaction or "dialogue", and the socially constructed "dialogue" plays a central role in all cognitive development (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006).

Concerning sociocultural theory, there are several fundamental concepts. Among these concepts, scaffolding has been used to conceptualize teacher feedback (e.g., Freedman, 1987). Basically, scaffolding is defined 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" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 90). In the L1 writing context, based on this sociocultural concept, Freedman (1987) defined teacher response to student writing as social and collaborative scaffolding during which teachers and students work together with the aim of helping the student writers develop self-regulation.

In L2 writing contexts, there is still a lack of consensus on the meaning of scaffolding (Weissberg, 2006). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that it includes the following three characteristics: 1) one participant with greater expertise, 2) a primary objective to make the novice participant self-sufficient, and 3) social interaction founded on the novice participant's Zone of Proximal Development ("ZPD", the distance between what the novice participant is independently able to do currently and what he is able to potentially do with help).

According to Hyland and Hyland (2006b), in the genre-based L2 writing classroom, teacher feedback is a type of scaffolded instruction. It unfolds between an expert teacher and a novice student writer and aims to help the student to be able to solve

problems in writing on his own and achieve self-regulation. Based on the above-mentioned characteristics of sociocultural scaffolding, it can be seen that it puts an emphasis on the teachers' dynamic support since the provision of feedback needs to be based on the novice's ZPD. By implication, this approach of viewing teacher feedback as sociocultural scaffolding is fairly explanatory in terms of how the teacher provides feedback (based on the student's ZPD). The problem is, to some extent, it is not sufficiently powerful to explain how students respond to teacher feedback.

**2.2.1.5 Teacher written feedback: From the perspective of activity theory**

Furthermore, in L2 writing contexts, Lee (2014, 2017) used activity theory (a subbranch of sociocultural theory) to offer a theoretical explanation for teacher feedback. So far, three generations of activity theories have emerged (Vygotsky's first-generation, Leont'ev's second-generation, and Engeström's third generation). Developing the work of Vygotsky (who views knowledge as sociohistorically mediated), Leont'ev (1978) considered all human activities to be embedded in socio-historical-cultural settings and contain three levels: "the motives which elicit the activity, the actions brought about by goals to achieve the action, and the conditions (or operations) under which the activity is carried out [through appropriate mediational means]" (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012, p. 72). Engeström (1987) further expanded Leont'ev's (1978) three levels of activities and developed a model for activity theory. He argued that a human activity, as a system, is comprised of "subject" (e.g., teachers or students), "object" (the target of activities; e.g., student self-regulation), "mediating artifacts" (i.e., mediational tools or means; e.g., teacher written feedback), "rules" (i.e., "conditions" in Leont'ev's term; e.g., product/process-oriented writing as a "rule"), "community" (i.e., "conditions" in Leont'ev's term; e.g., teachers, students, principal, parents, etc.), and "division of labor" (i.e., "conditions" in Leont'ev's term; e.g., teacher and student responsibility as feedback providers and receivers). Like Leont'ev, Engeström also assigned agency to the activity "subjects" (e.g., teachers and students), and highlighted the motivation/goal-driven and situated nature of human activities (i.e., "conditions" in Engeström's term). Leont'ev's and Engeström's emphasis on subjects' agency and situated nature of human activities has implications for a good understanding of teacher feedback.

First, according to theorists' emphasis on subjects' agency, the "subject" of any social activity is agentic. By implication, when giving feedback and forging a social interaction with students, teachers are the "subjects" who have agency. In other words, they are the agentic feedback providers who have wills and capacities to act independently and make their own decisions (Gao, 2010). In fact, researchers have found that, when providing feedback, L2 writing teachers keep enacting their agency. They tailor their feedback activities according to who is receiving the feedback, what text the feedback is provided for, and in which context feedback is provided (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Ferris, et al., 1997).

As for the students, within the framework of activity theory, they are agentic learners when using mediational tools (or mediating artifacts; e.g., teacher feedback) and transforming themselves from a lower form of thinking (elementary perception, involuntary attention, natural memory) to a higher form of thinking (voluntary attention, logical reasoning, planning, problem solving, and monitoring of mental processes). As agentic learners, activity theorists consider they have the will and the capacity "to establish goals, set up conditions, and choose the means that best suit their motives or needs in learning" (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006, p. 26). By implication, students, as subjects who have different capacities, motives, beliefs, needs, and learning goals, may view, interpret, and attend to teacher feedback differently and take an active role in the interactive response.

Second, Engeström's (1987) emphasis on the situated nature of human activities allows us to see that teacher feedback, as a social activity, is embedded in contexts and it is inherently dynamic. As mentioned above, activity theory emphasizes that all human activities are rooted in socio-historical-cultural settings. An implication of this for teacher feedback is that, when providing/dealing with feedback, teachers/students may be greatly influenced by the sociocultural and historical contexts they are rooted in. In addition, one of the focal points of activity theory is its "rules" (e.g., product/process-oriented writing as a "rule"). From it, the following implication arises. That is, the rules and values of the institutions that teachers and students belong to may intrude into classrooms, which then may considerably influence the meanings teachers and students attach to the written feedback they give/receive, and

the expectations they have about teacher feedback. This may then influence teachers' provision of feedback and students' response to feedback.

By comparison, looking at teacher feedback from the perspective of activity theory offers more useful explanations of it. It provides better explanations about how teachers provide feedback, how students deal with feedback, and how teachers' provision of feedback and students' response to feedback are influenced by the contexts they are rooted and situated in. However, in comparison with Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development that is to be presented in the following sub-section, it seems that activity theory still cannot adequately explain the role of the teacher in providing feedback, the role of the student in responding to teacher feedback, how the student learns, the nature of teacher feedback itself, and the interaction among these elements. Section 2.2.1.6 explains how teacher feedback is informed by the principles of Atkinson's sociocognitive theory.

### 2.2.1.6 Teacher written feedback: From the perspective of sociocognitive theory

Most recently, with Atkinson's (2002, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014) adequate elucidation of the sociocognitive theory of learning and development, this theory has had a wider influence. It has been applied to second language acquisition (e.g., Atkinson, 2011) and studies on L2 writing (e.g., Ng & Cheung, 2018; Nishino & Atkinson, 2015) and error feedback (e.g., Han, 2016). In fact, it can lend itself to the conceptualization of teacher feedback as well.

Generally speaking, the sociocognitive theory of learning and development is in line with the sociocultural theory of learning and development. They both give centrality to cognition and social interaction. However, different from sociocultural theory that emphasizes the contribution of social interaction to cognitive development, sociocognitive theory emphasizes the inseparability of cognition and the ecosocial interaction that occurs between humans or that occurs between humans and their non-human environments (Atkinson, 2011; see more explanation below on ecosocial interaction).

According to Atkinson (2011), to understand the cognition dimension of the sociocognitive theory, the reasoning behind it should be offered. The reasoning he uncovered is as follows:

Like all organisms, human beings are ecological organisms—they depend on their environment to survive. For this same reason, humans are adaptive organisms—they survive by continuously and dynamically adapting to their environment. Cognition plays a central role in this endeavour by promoting intelligent, adaptive action-in-the-world, and to do so it must be intimately aligned with its environment. Put differently, cognition is a node in an ecological network comprising mind–body–world—it is part of a *relationship* (italics in original). (p. 143)

In this passage, Atkinson attempted to justify at least three points of view. First, from the ecological perspective, cognition should be brought to the centre stage due to its role in the survival and prosperity of human beings. Second, to survive and prosper, cognition functions through its continuous and dynamic adaptation to the environment and it develops when its alignment with the environment occurs. Third, cognition does not stand alone; it is part of its body (e.g., bodily states, bodily orientation, and emotions, Atkinson, 2011) and the environment (including both the physical setting and social contexts, Atkinson, 2011).

As to the inseparability of cognition, body, and the environment, Atkinson (2011) has ever used one example to explain the integration of **cognition** and **environment**. In his example, Atkinson said, when driving to work, he just needed to "turn right at the apartment entrance, left at Walmart, bear right onto Northwestern, and then the campus appeared straight ahead" (p. 145). In Atkinson's opinion, as the roads thought for the driver and the cognition needed for driving was quite modest, the line between cognition and the supporting environment often dissolves and they are sometimes functionally integrated. In addition, Atkinson (2011) used empirical evidence to argue that the **body** is intimately involved in **cognition**. He said that researchers have already proved with experiments that "bodily states, bodily orientation, and emotions affect and are affected by cognitive processes, and cognitive development depends on embodied action" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 145).

As mentioned earlier in this sub-section, apart from cognition, Atkinson (2011, 2014) also considered ecosocial interaction lies at the heart of sociocognitive approach. He pointed out ecosocial interaction, which involves interaction between human beings and interaction between human beings and non-human environments, underlies and supports learning and cognitive development. According to Atkinson (2014), when individuals interact with one another and/or they interact with the environment, the

interactants become intercognizers. This is because the interactants/intercognizers, from moment to moment, are effecting and maintaining coordinated ecosocial interaction according to "who we [they] are talking to, the conventional formality of the situation, the physical setting and its affordances, the topic, and the interlocutors' background knowledge, emotional states, and linguistic competence" (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015, p. 38). Simply put, the sociocognitive approach views ecosocial interaction and its result (cognitive development) as a moment-to-moment alignment process that builds upon the adaptations the interactants/intercognizers continuously make according to human factors (e.g., "who we are talking to") and contextual factors (e.g., "the conventional formality of the situation").

In brief, Atkinson claimed that his sociocognitive theory of learning and development, which is fundamentally cognitive and interactive, rests on the following three principles:

1) **The inseparability principle**: It holds that "… what *goes on between* [ecosocial interaction] and *what goes in* [cognition] cannot properly be separated" and "… [the interactants'/intercognizers'] thinking, feeling, doing, and learning are all parts of ecological circuit" (Atkinson, Churchill, Nishino, & Okada, 2007, p. 169). In simple words, the interactants'/intercognizers' mind, body, and world function inseparably and they work as a "mindbodyworld" ecology in producing ecosocial interactions and leading to cognitive development (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).
2) **The adaptivity principle**: In the course of ecosocial interaction, the interactants/intercognizers mutually, continuously, and dynamically adapt, adjust, and align their behaviour, and they also flexibly adapt their behaviours to the ever-changing physical and social environments. Furthermore, according to Atkinson (2010a), the ever-changing environment is highly structured for cognitive activity, which may be natural environment, or human environment, or cultural environment.
3) **The alignment principle**: Human beings survive and prosper primarily by aligning with human and non-human others, and alignment underlies all forms of ecosocial actions and interactions (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).

As sociocognitive interaction is not limited to a face-to-face version and it is considered to concern "a wide range of social activities of more mediated types" (Atkinson, 2014, p. 474), it appears that it can be safely assumed that sociocognitive theory can be extended to understanding and conceptualizing teacher feedback. Informed by sociocognitive theory, teacher written feedback can be defined as an ecosocial interaction. It involves teacher-student interaction (social interaction) and ecosocial interaction between the teacher/student and non-human environments (e.g.,

the interaction between students and teacher feedback as the textual-level context), which both mediate student learning and development.

More specifically, from the perspective of the inseparability principle, during the feedback process (i.e., ecosocial interaction), the teacher and the student, both work as a "mindbodyworld" (Atkinson, 2014) ecology. In other words, the teacher's/student's thinking, feelings, actions and the world which the teacher/student is situated in and is shaped by function inseparably when the teacher provides feedback and the student responds to teacher feedback. From the perspective of the adaptivity principle, to enable the occurrence of alignment during the feedback process, the teacher and the student mutually adapt to each other. Meanwhile, the teacher as feedback provider and the student as feedback recipient also keep adjusting their behaviours to the structured and ever-changing environments. For example, as mentioned in Sub-section 2.2.1.5, researchers (e.g., Goldstein, 2006) have found that teachers often take the different contextual factors into consideration to tailor their feedback activities. What is more, from the perspective of the alignment principle, the achievement of a higher level of interactional alignment during the feedback process is at the core of teacher feedback.

In comparison with equating teacher feedback as sociocultural "scaffolding" and using activity theory to look at teacher feedback, viewing teacher feedback from the sociocognitive perspective better explains what it means. By drawing on the three sociocognitive principles to inform teacher feedback, its basic elements can be addressed as follows:

1) its essence: complex, dynamic ecosocial interaction which includes teacher-student interaction and the teacher's/student's interaction with structured, ever-changing contexts (e.g., student writing, teacher feedback);
2) the teacher: the feedback provider working as a "mindbodyworld" ecology;
3) the student: the feedback recipient working as a "mindbodyworld" ecology;
4) the contexts: the structured, ever-changing ecosocial environments, or in other word, the "world" in "mindbodyworld";
5) student writing: the text-level context the student constructs;
6) the feedback itself: the text-level context the teacher constructs; and
7) occurrence of learning and development: the occurrence of alignment during the feedback process (ecosocial interaction).

**2.2.2 A review of writing pedagogies: Importance of teacher feedback and argumentation-related feedback**

As introduced at the beginning of Section 2.2, following the review of perspectives on teacher feedback is a review of writing pedagogies. It shows the tendency towards a recognition of the importance of argumentation-related feedback, which provides a theoretical justification for my study.

**Product-oriented pedagogy: Importance of error feedback**

According to Silva (1990), when L2 writing studies began in the U.S. academic setting in 1945, learning to write in a second language was "essentially as reinforcement for oral habits" (p. 12) and the writing text of L2 students was nothing but "a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items" (p. 13). Under such circumstances, the L2 writer became "simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures" (p. 12) and L2 writing teachers mainly played the role of editors and proof-readers who were primarily concerned with formal linguistic features.

In the mid-sixties, L2/ESL writing drew on the basic principles of "current-traditional rhetoric" from L1 composition instruction and particularly noted the differences between L1 and L2 rhetoric. According to Kaplan, rhetoric was "the method of organizing syntactic into larger patterns" (1967, p. 15) and ESL writers usually "employ a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violate the expectations of the native reader" (1966, p. 4). Seen from the perspective of the L2 version of "current-traditional rhetoric", learning to write involved becoming skilled in identifying, internalizing, and executing these unfamiliar rhetoric- and cultural-specific patterns. However, as writing teaching and learning were still considered as a matter of assisting learners to remember and execute rhetorical patterns (Kaplan, 1967), this mechanical way of teaching rhetorical patterns did not provide much support for the importance of teacher feedback on rhetorical issues, although it seemed rather necessary.

**Process-oriented pedagogy: Importance of non-error feedback**

The importance of feedback in general and non-error feedback specifically is acknowledged with the appearance of process-oriented approaches to writing instruction (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). At the early stage, in the process-oriented

classroom, writing was considered as a process that allowed the individual writer to experiment with language, to discover his own original and authentic voice, and to write his personal experience. Seeing writing in this self-exploratory way, teachers usually needed to provide student writers with positive and cooperative environments to think actively through pre-writing tasks, to freely write as many words as possible, to talk with peers and teachers, and to revise. This orientation to writing as an expressive process directed both teachers and student writers' attention to content before grammatical form. According to Hyland (2003), this orientation required teachers to respond to the idea the students produce and not to dwell on formal errors.

In the 1980s, the cognitive process-oriented theory of writing gradually replaced the above-mentioned expressive process-oriented theory of writing. In the cognitive process-oriented writing classroom, feedback sessions were taken as one of the hallmarks of the process. During the writing process, teachers use feedback, which chiefly addresses global issues of organization and content on the early draft, and local issues like grammar, word choice, and mechanic at a later stage of the writing process to assist students in rethinking and improving their work before it is finalized. Therefore, in this context, non-error feedback is considered crucial for helping learners to move through the stages of the writing process, which involve discovering meaning, growing control over composing skills, and developing language and writing abilities.

## SFL-informed genre pedagogy: Importance of non-error feedback and argumentation-related feedback

In genre-based pedagogical context, learning and writing are both considered as social activities. As such, the emergence of genre writing pedagogies signifies an important paradigm shift in teaching (from the behavioral and cognitive conceptions that underlie product- and process-oriented pedagogies to the social perspective of writing instruction that underlies genre pedagogy, Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996). Nowadays, the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) school and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) school of genre have become "the two most influential orientations in L2 classrooms worldwide" (Hyland, 2007, p. 153). These two schools of genre pedagogies both acknowledge the importance of teacher feedback in general and EA feedback in particular. However, as my study is less relevant to ESP school

of genre pedagogy, a school of genre pedagogy which is usually oriented to advanced essays and research reports, or to business and other workplace genres, the following review concentrates on SFL-informed genre pedagogy.

SFL-based genre pedagogy usually starts by identifying the important genres. For school students to learn and compose texts, *narrative*, *descriptive*, *expository*, and *argumentative* genres are often identified in teaching and examinations (Allison, 1999). To teach how to write these genres, according to Hyland (2007), L2 genre teachers need to prepare opportunities for the students to **engage in**, **explore**, **explain**, **extend**, and **evaluate their learning**, and implement the following activities: **planning learning**, **sequencing learning**, **supporting learning**, and **assessing learning**.

When L2 teachers are **planning learning**, according to Hyland (2007), the key role they play is identifying students' immediate needs and doing needs analysis to obtain ideas about what students already know, what they are able to do, and what they are interested in and expect. **Sequencing learning** is another key element of genre pedagogy. SFL-informed genre pedagogy makes expositions and persuasions central to L2 teachers' classroom instruction because of writers' particular difficulty in dealing with argumentation. According to Connors and Glenn (1987), L2 students are usually familiar with the narrative genre but have trouble in generalizing, organizing, and arguing for ideas when writing expositions or persuasions. Hyland (2007) also claimed that "exposition" and "explanation" are more difficult for learners to write than "recounts" (story-writing about what has happened, Martin 1989) and "procedures" (a close type to narrative which is built up around a sequence of events, Martin, 1989).

As far as **supporting learning** is concerned, in the genre-based classrooms, L2 genre teachers' scaffolding is particularly considered important. As mentioned above, genre pedagogy considers writing and learning to write as social activities. As such, it emphasizes assisting the students through teacher-supported scaffolding and teacher-student interaction. According to Hyland (2003), L2 genre teachers need to explicitly assist the student to understand how texts in target genres are structured and why they are written the ways they are. Furthermore, Hyland (2007) suggested that teacher

scaffolding take various forms depending on students' genre knowledge and abilities, genres of the writing task, writing purpose, and even student individuality (e.g., modelling of texts, discussion of texts, explicit instruction). Hyland's suggestion about providing individualized, teacher-supported scaffolding definitely makes teacher feedback, a type of scaffolding support that offers a kind of individualized attention, become central to SFL-informed genre pedagogy.

Concerning **the assessment of learning**, the importance of genre teachers' feedback is once again recognized. It achieves its centrality because genre pedagogies encourage using ongoing teacher feedback (rather than achievement assessment) to establish a writing environment (rather than a grading environment) so that students can gain greater motivation and confidence to write (Hyland, 2007). In fact, genre teachers, who explicitly organize their class around genres, are in a better position to identify student problems, precisely target feedback, provide informed feedback on student writing, and offer feedback with greater confidence that students will recognize and use their suggestions (Hyland, 2007). As they are able to take control of the degree of teacher intervention, usually their feedback support is gradually removed with the increase of student independence and confidence in using a particular genre.

In brief, as genre-related feedback connects the teacher and the student for an interaction on an individual level and creates a supportive teaching environment, it achieves its centrality in the genre-oriented writing classroom. In actuality, more value of genre-related feedback can be seen in the EFL writing environments. This is because in the EFL environments students are likely to be more strongly influenced by the rhetorical patterns of their home culture and may face greater challenges when learning new genres (Edlund, 2003, p. 371).

To sum up, with the development of writing pedagogies, teacher feedback plays a more important role in the writing classrooms. Moreover, as producing English exposition and argumentation is an issue for L2 students, argumentation-related issues in L2 students' expository/argumentative writing has been placed at the center stage for L2 teachers when they offer scaffolding feedback. That is to say, from a theoretical perspective, carrying out studies on ESL and EFL teachers' EA feedback

is highly worthwhile. In fact, EFL teachers' non-error EA feedback is worthy of in-depth investigation from an empirical perspective as well. In the following section, the justification for empirically researching into it is provided through a review of the previous studies about L2 teachers' non-error feedback.

## 2.3 Empirical research literature: A focused thematic review

In this section, an overview of the previous empirical studies about L2 teachers' feedback is offered. All the studies reviewed in this section took a broad view of teacher feedback. They focused on non-error feedback and often touched upon teachers' error feedback as well. According to Goldstein (2016), these studies can be categorized into four strands:

1) student perspectives on teacher feedback (e.g., student evaluation of it),
2) the feedback itself (e.g., feedback foci and delivery approaches),
3) teacher cognition (i.e., the teacher's feedback beliefs and practices), and
4) the feedback-and-response process (i.e., feedback-and-revision process).

Certainly, there are overlaps across these four strands of research. For example, before studying students' reactions to teacher feedback, researchers often first investigate the teacher feedback itself so as to contextualize their studies (e.g., Lee, 2008b). Thus, there is some overlap between the first and second strands of research. The third and fourth strands of research overlap with the second strand of research too. For example, when studying teacher cognition and investigating the teacher's belief-practice (mis)matches, Z. Wang (2011) examined the feedback itself to understand the teacher's feedback practice. To understand the feedback-and-interpretation process, Hyland and Hyland (2006a) investigated the key elements of the teacher feedback itself (feedback foci and delivery approaches). Taking the research overlaps into consideration, this literature review critically discusses and evaluates each of these four research strands. It argues that the three RQs raised at the end of this section are worthy of study.

### 2.3.1 Research strand 1: Studies about student perspectives on teacher feedback

This strand of research, which has generated great research interest (Casanave, 2004; Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2001, 2016), mainly investigates the following issues:

- **students' expectations, preferences, evaluation, and reactions regarding teacher feedback** (Best, Jones-Katz, Smolarek, Stolzenburg, & Williamson, 2015; Brice, 1995; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Diab, 2005a, 2005b; Elwood & Bode, 2014; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock &

Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Lee, 2008b; Li, 2016; Mahfoodh, 2017; Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011; Mustafa, 2012; Saito, 1994; Seker & Dincer, 2014; Song, Lee, & Leong, 2017; Treglia, 2008; Zacharias, 2007),

- **students' views about their reading, understanding, processing, and use of teacher feedback, and the way students actually process and use teacher feedback** (Brice, 1995; Chapin & Terdal, 1990; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Lee, 2008b; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994; Zacharias, 2007),
- **the (mis)matches between students' perceptions of teacher feedback and teachers' perceptions/assessment of their own feedback practices** (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Diab, 2005b; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), and
- **the factors that influence student perspectives on teacher feedback** (e.g., Lee, 2008b; Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011; Zacharias, 2007).

A comprehensive review of this large body of studies points to the following conclusions:

1) students' positive attitude to teacher feedback,
2) uniqueness of studies from the perspective of methodology,
3) lack of in-depth studies,
4) imprecise findings,
5) inconsistent findings related to student difficulty in understanding teacher feedback,
6) a scarcity of a type of "student perspectives" study, and
7) a growing expansion of the scope of inquiry.

In the following, these conclusions are discussed in turn.

**Students' positive attitude to teacher written feedback**

Generally speaking, students favored teacher feedback. They reported that they expected to receive feedback from teachers, welcomed it, took it seriously, and felt it was helpful (e.g., Brice, 1995; Clements, 2008; Diab, 2005b; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Lee, 2008b; Li, 2016; Seker & Dincer, 2014; Yang, 2013; Zacharias, 2007). In Lee's (2008b) words, regardless of students' proficiency levels, "there seemed a tendency for students to wish for 'more [feedback]' from the teacher (p. 151).

Also, it was found that students read most, or even all of teacher comments (Brice, 1995; Chapin & Terdal, 1990; Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Radecki & Swales, 1988). According to Radecki and Swales' (1988) study of students' attitudes towards their use of teacher feedback, only 13% of students were feedback resistors. In contrast, 46% were receptors and 41% were semi-resistors (receptors, semi-resistors, and

resistors: three types of students categorized by the researchers according to student attitudes towards their use of teacher feedback). Cohen (1987) further reported that students extensively attended to teacher comments on grammar and mechanics, vocabulary, organization, and content.

**Uniqueness of studies from the perspective of methodology**

In fact, each "student perspectives" study seems to be a unique one when the research methodology is considered. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of the following evidence. First, in these studies, the student participants came from heterogeneous backgrounds in terms of their first language (e.g., English L1, ESL, EFL, FL), learning experience, learning and teaching contexts (e.g., university, institute, community college, or secondary schools), and the levels of the courses they were in (e.g., academic or non-academic courses for undergraduates, graduates, and English and non-English majors). Second, the same terms in these studies were often used in different ways. For example, Zacharias (2007) and Treglia (2008) both investigated students' "affective reactions" to teacher feedback. However, Zacharias looked at students' perceptions of the impact of teacher feedback on their feelings (e.g., "helpless", "disappointed", "sad", or "discouraged"), while Treglia (2008) examined student perceptions of what types of teacher feedback they preferred (e.g., students' preference for mitigated commentary). Given the uniqueness of studies, it seems it is still not easy to generalize the findings of the existing body of work.

**Lack of in-depth studies**

Generally, "student perspectives" studies still have not provided an in-depth look at student perspectives. One of the reasons that restricts the depth of this strand of research is that the scope of most studies is still broad. Researchers often just studied students' perspectives on teacher feedback on content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics but did not go beyond that. For example, Lee's (2008b) interviews just showed 11% of highly proficient students said they had no difficulty in understanding teacher feedback. As students' attitudes towards the various types of content feedback and/or organization feedback have seldom received further examination, this strand of work must continue to increase its depth by narrowing its scope.

**Imprecise findings**

Sometimes the findings related to "student perspectives" studies were reported imprecisely. For instance, concerning the studies that touched upon students' views about how they handled feedback (e.g., making a mental note, writing down points, identifying points to be explained, asking for teacher explanation, referring back to previous compositions, consulting a grammar book, and rewriting), researchers' (e.g., Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990) finding reports were often general and vague. For example, there were findings reported as follows: **some** intermediate proficiency level students **sometimes** just made a mental note of teacher written feedback; or "poor" writers (self-rated), rather than high proficiency level students, **frequently** consulted other sources (not teachers) to solve their problems. These results indicated that students' writing ability might influence how the students handled teacher feedback, but they are still too general and a little vague. More importantly, they did not contain information about how students handle teachers' error and non-error feedback respectively.

**Inconsistent findings regarding difficulty in understanding teacher feedback**

In feedback studies (Brice, 1995; Chapin & Terdal, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Zacharias, 2007), students' perceptions of their understanding of teacher feedback were often found to be inconsistent. In fact, the available findings about students' understanding of teacher feedback are diverse. Students either largely agreed that they never had any problems understanding teacher comments (e.g., Ferris, 1995), or reported that they had difficulty in understanding teacher feedback (e.g., Nazif, Biswas, & Hilbig, 2004; Zacharias, 2007), or acknowledged that they did not always understand teacher comments although they could make revisions appropriately (e.g., Chapin & Terdal, 1990), or claimed that they could understand teacher feedback but did not always agree with it (e.g., Ferris, 1995).

Moreover, several studies attempted to correlate students' competence in writing/language and their understanding of a particular type of teacher feedback, which further hinders the emergence of consistent findings. For example, in Brice's (1995) study, one of the three participants (self-rated **intermediate-level** ESL writer from Asia) mentioned she had difficulty in understanding her teacher's implicit feedback on content. In Cohen's (1991) study, **high- and low-performing** EFL

students seemed to have greater difficulty understanding teacher feedback on supporting evidence than the intermediate student. In general, it seems that student ability is a variable which may influence the findings of research into students' understanding of teacher feedback, but previous work reported different findings about the influence of this variable.

**A scarcity of a type of "student perspectives" studies**

However, research literature about "student perspectives" is still scant. This is because, as mentioned above, in-depth investigations into student perspectives are still needed. Moreover, studies about how students actually process teacher feedback are rare. A review of the literature shows that the earliest "student perspectives" study, titled *"Student processing of feedback on their compositions"*, is a study about how students process teacher feedback (Cohen, 1987). In his study, Cohen surveyed ESL, L1, and FL college students' opinions about how they "processed" teacher feedback by utilizing a 12-item questionnaire. The survey showed most of the students, whatever their first language was, said that they wanted teacher feedback on different areas of their writing (e.g., content feedback, organization feedback, grammar feedback, etc.). Also, the students noted that "making a mental note" was the chief strategy they employed to attend to teacher feedback while "rewriting papers" was more popular among students who rated themselves as poor writers. However, in this "processing" study, Cohen's student participants did not really undergo feedback-processing processes. As mentioned above, they were only asked to respond to a questionnaire, instead of reporting what they were doing at the moment they were processing teacher feedback.

Different from Cohen (1987), Brice (1995) asked her participants to do think-alouds and the students did engage in feedback-processing processes. In Brice's study, three types of students were reported. They either spent a great deal of time and effort explaining and justifying their work, or carried out various cognitive operations (e.g., describing teacher comments, explaining their understanding of teacher comments, and responding to teacher comments), or frequently just read teacher feedback. In her study, Brice placed her findings into six broad categories. That is, the students' understanding of and agreement with teacher feedback on "content", "organization", "grammar", "vocabulary", "conventions", and "the student writers". Brice found that

only the student who often just read teacher feedback expressed a lack of understanding of implicit content feedback while the other two had no difficulty in understanding content feedback. In addition, although Brice did not further categorize content and organization feedback, the examples she provided in her report showed that one student could not agree with the teacher's feedback on supporting evidence.

Kumar (2012) and her colleagues (Kumar & Kumar, 2009; Kumar, Kumar, & Feryok, 2009) also used think-alouds to study students' processing of feedback on their work. In these studies, the researchers reported that their student participants' acceptance and use of teacher feedback resulted from their recursive thought process, which included their interpretation and evaluation of teacher feedback, their consideration of and reflection on the issues that were highlighted in teacher feedback, and their justification and explanation of their own work. Unlike Brice who correlated the students' thought process and feedback types (e.g., content and organization feedback), Kumar and her colleagues devoted most of their attention to uncovering the recursion of the students' cognitive thought process and did not highlight its connection to feedback types or other feedback variables. In this sense, the depth sought in Kumar and her colleagues' studies is still somewhat lacking.

Devoting attention to what students undergo when they are attending to teacher feedback is highly worthwhile. It reflects that researchers have begun to target the cognitive aspect of teacher feedback and attempt to advance the study of "student perspectives". Obviously, research into it remains limited. Students' understanding of, agreement with, and acceptance of teacher feedback need to be better understood.

**Expanded scope of inquiry**
In early studies, researchers usually just looked at the link between student reactions and the teacher feedback itself. For example, in an early study, it was reported students perceived teacher feedback that gave attention to linguistic errors, provided guidance on compositional skills, and included overall evaluative comments on content and quality of writing to be effective (Enginarlar, 1993). However, since the 2000s, "student perspectives" studies are becoming increasingly contextualized. Researchers have recognized that student perspectives are closely bound up with specific contexts and are greatly influenced by the contexts, both micro and macro.

Currently, an array of personal and contextual factors that may influence student perspectives on teacher feedback have been uncovered. The influential factors that had been identified include: student language proficiency/writing abilities (e.g., Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Lee, 2008b), student motivation (e.g., Lee, 2008b), power distribution between student and teacher (e.g., Zacharias, 2007), students' past experiences (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011), students' acceptance of their teacher to control their written text (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011), grades (Best, Jones-Katz, Smolarek, Stolzenburg, & Willimamson, 2015), instructional contexts (e.g., Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Lee, 2008b), and sociocultural contexts (e.g., Treglia, 2008; Zacharias, 2007).

However, Kumar, Kumar and Feryok's (2009) study further complicated the issue about what factors may influence students' perceptions of and reactions to teacher feedback. They found that culture did not play a strong role in students' responses to teacher feedback and claimed that sometimes students' responses to teacher feedback might be mainly influenced by a variety of other personal and contextual factors (e.g., language proficiency, level of study, relationship with the teacher, and instructional context). Generally, it is reassuring to observe that the breadth of recent "student perspectives" scholarship is improving; but in-depth investigations are still needed so that the complexity of findings can be explained.

**"Student perspectives" studies: A summary**

A review of "student perspectives" studies suggests that, for this line of research, problems still exist regarding terms, methodology, depth of studies, consistency of findings, and underexplored issues. To advance "student perspectives" studies and move the discussion of "student perspectives" forward faster, researchers need to consider addressing these issues in their studies.

**2.3.2 Research strand 2: Studies about the feedback itself**

On the whole, "the feedback itself" studies mainly investigate teachers' feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches and their influence on students' use of teacher feedback (e.g., F. Hyland, 1998; Lee, 2008a; Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinti, 1997).

Like Section 2.3.1, a review of this strand of studies leads to a number of generalizations. They include:

1) a negative conclusion about teacher feedback,
2) uniqueness of studies in terms of methodology/terminology,
3) lack of in-depth studies related to feedback focus,
4) two research traditions,
5) inconsistent findings related to feedback foci and the influence of teacher feedback,
6) a scarcity of a type of "the feedback itself" studies, and
7) a growing expansion of the scope of inquiry.

This sub-section focuses on these generalizations.

**A negative conclusion about teacher feedback**

It seems that the beginning of "the feedback itself" research can be traced back to the 1980s when researchers mainly reported its problems. According to Reid (1994), during the 1980s, it was difficult to go to a conference presentation without hearing about teachers' appropriation of students' writing via feedback. For a long time, the key words for characterizing teacher feedback were "appropriation" and "unclear and not text specific" (e.g., Zamel, 1985). As mentioned in Section 2.2, Reid (1994), as well as Silva (1988), considered that the strong viewpoint researchers like Zamel (1985) embraced overlooked the role of social contexts (e.g., teacher-student relationship and classroom context) and therefore their equation of teacher feedback with appropriation was exaggerated. However, nowadays, it seems that some researchers continue reporting findings similar to Zamel's conclusion and pointed out that teacher feedback was unclear and not text specific (e.g., Ferris, Liu, & Rabie, 2011). That is to say, the problems with teacher feedback may continue to be discussed by researchers. However, Reid's and Silva's argument implies that, when researchers' thinking about teacher feedback is mature sufficiently, it is possible that teacher feedback can be seen in a more positive light.

**Uniqueness of studies in terms of methodology/terminology**

A review of literature shows a typical feature of the "the feedback itself" studies seems to be the uniqueness of each study. The following is the evidence that supports this claim. First, the studies are unique because different feedback foci existed in different studies, which included "content feedback" (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Diab, 2005b; Fathman & Whalley, 1990), "content and organization feedback" (e.g., Lee,

2008a), "idea feedback" (content and organization feedback; e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006a), "text-level feedback" (content and rhetoric feedback; e.g., Goldstein, 2006), "discourse feedback" (e.g., Z. Wang, 2011), "feedback on 'high-order concerns'" (content and organization feedback; e.g., Ferris, 2014), and "global corrective feedback " (content and organization feedback; e.g., Junqueira & Payant, 2015).

Second, these studies are unique because the same term was often defined differently. Take "content feedback" as an example. Ashwell (2000) used it as feedback on organization, paragraphing, cohesion, and relevance. Diab (2005b) defined it more broadly as feedback on development, thesis statement, consistency, organization, and content/ideas. Fathman and Whalley (1990) did not define it in their study. The examples they used in their paper indicated that it referred to feedback on genre, supporting evidence, cohesion, and paragraph development.

In fact, employing different terms creates not only uniqueness but also confusion. Here is an example. Junqueira and Payant (2015) used "global written corrective feedback" to refer to content and organization feedback. However, according to Bitchener and Storch (2016), "written corrective feedback" is generally understood as the feedback that is provided on linguistic errors rather than on content or organization. In this sense, future feedback studies need to address this terminological diversity and confusion, or at least exercise caution when generalizing findings.

**Lack of in-depth studies**
Similar to "student perspectives" studies, "the feedback itself" studies also lack depth. This is also because most studies did not move beyond the boundary of content and/or organization feedback to further break it down into sub-categories (e.g., Brice, 1995; Lee, 2008a; Ferris, 2014; Junqueira & Payant, 2015). Moreover, even if the researchers further divided content and/or organization feedback, they often simply reported findings in the following simple, general way: "In addition to grammar and sentence-level feedback, the instructor responded to content-level issues such as structure and organization, development, logic and consistency, attention to audience, and focus or thesis statement" (Diab, 2005b, p. 34). In Ashwell's (2000) paper, the researcher presented a more finely grained analysis of

content feedback (in his word), including organization, paragraphing, cohesion, and relevance; but in his paper there was no findings related to these various types of content feedback. It seems that he just provided the sub-categories he created to explain how he analysed data.

**Two research traditions**

A review of "the feedback itself" literature also reveals that at present there exist two main traditions of research. In the tradition of Ferris, by categorizing teacher feedback into statement, imperative, and question according to its pragmatic functions, the researchers attempted to correlate these types of feedback and students' use of feedback/revision (e.g., Best, 2011; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2009; Sugita, 2006; Treglia, 2009). In the tradition of Hyland and Hyland, teacher feedback is grouped into praise, criticism, and suggestion according to its orientation; and researchers attempted to investigate students' response to and use of praise, criticism, and suggestion (e.g., Clements, 2008; F. Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001, 2006; Treglia, 2009). Of course, it is important to note that this is not a strict division since some studies touched upon these two traditions (e.g., Treglia, 2009). Ferris also reported findings about the extent to which teachers provide positive feedback or suggestion and how students respond and use positive feedback (e.g., Ferris, 1995; 1997; 2014).

**Inconsistent findings**

Currently, findings are still not consistent regarding

- what teachers focus on,
- how teachers deliver feedback,
- what the influence of (1) "positive feedback", (2) "the hedges implied in feedback", and (3) "questions, statements, and imperatives" on students and their revision is, and
- whether feedback delivery approaches influence students' revision.

These inconsistent findings are offered below.

*What teachers focus on*

According to Goldstein (2016), researchers have a continued focus on the issue of what concerns teachers mainly respond to. However, the findings available up to now just show the extent to which teacher feedback broadly focuses on and the results

vary across studies. For example, Lee (2008a, 2008b) and Montgomery and Baker (2007) found that teachers gave some attention to content/ideas, but they rarely provided feedback on organization (e.g., development of ideas, paragraphing, and overall organization). Li (2016) reported 31% of an EFL teacher's feedback was on content and 14% of her feedback was on organization. Z. Wang's (2011) and Ashwell's (2000) studies reported a high proportion of organization feedback, about 60% and 80% respectively. In these studies, when reporting findings about teachers' feedback foci, researchers (e.g., Lee, 2008a, 2008b) often connected them with the students' writing/language proficiency and which draft is submitted for commenting. By implication, the differences in findings across studies can be explained when teachers' feedback foci are contextualized.

*How teachers deliver feedback*

Concerning the studies that followed Hyland and Hyland's tradition, the empirical evidence on L2 teachers' feedback delivery approaches does not paint a consistent picture. For example, Hyland and Hyland's (2001, 2006a) results indicated a similar amount of positive and negative feedback, but a different amount of suggestions. Treglia (2009) confirmed Hyland and Hyland's study in the sense that teachers provided a similar amount of positive feedback and criticism. Differently, Z. Wang (2011) reported an extreme case: 96% of her teacher participant's feedback was negative, 11% of which were suggestions (a type of negative feedback according to the researcher). Although Best (2011), as a teacher researcher, also provided considerable negative feedback on the second draft of student writing, she often used mitigation to soften her criticism. However, Clements' (2008) case study teacher preferred to provide positive comments (e.g., offering forced positive feedback) and he became more positive with the passage of time; but he did not manage to provide suggestions.

*What is the influence of questions, statements, imperatives on students' revision*

The studies following Ferris' (1997) lead mainly looked at the relationship between questions, statements, and imperatives and students' use of them; but the findings across studies are inconsistent. Ferris (1997), by doing a textual analysis of teacher comments and student revision, found requests phrased as questions or statements (rather than imperatives) usually led to successful revisions. Not consistent with

Ferris' finding, the findings Sugita (2006) and Nurmukhamedov and Kim (2009) obtained in the EFL and ESL contexts respectively similarly found that imperative comments were more effective for treating surface-level errors than for dealing with content issues, and imperatives produced more substantive and/or effective revisions compared to question or statement comments.

*What is the influence of positive feedback on students and students' revisions*
Findings about the influence of positive feedback on students and students' revisions are also mixed. In fact, even within one study, the students' responses to positive feedback have been found to vary. For example, in Hyland and Hyland's (2001, 2006a) studies, the students either reported that it was useless, or they disregarded it, or it motivated them to attend to teacher feedback. However, F. Hyland (1998) found that the two students she focused her attention on in her study both felt that positive feedback could motivate them to deal with teacher feedback, but their proficiency levels were different (low and high intermediate levels respectively). Ferris also reported two opposite findings. In one study (Ferris, 1995), she found that students could particularly remember the teachers' positive comments on their ideas and organization, while in another study (Ferris, 1997) she reported that positive comments had little effect on revision.

*What is the influence of hedges on students' revision*
As for the influence of hedges, the results have not been consistent either. One group of studies found that hedges had little effect on revision (e.g., Ferris, 1997; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Treglia, 2009). Conrad and Goldstein reported that students could follow even very indirect and hedged suggestions in most cases. The students in Treglia's study said they could clearly understand the intent of them, and the revision linked with mitigated and unmitigated comments did not reveal a noticeable difference. In fact, there were also findings supporting that hedges produced substantive revisions (Sugita, 2006). The other group of studies reported the harmful influence of hedges since providing hedged comments "carries the very real potential for incomprehension and miscommunication" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; p. 185). However, Nurmukhamedov and Kim (2009) found that hedges lead to effective revisions when they used the text-analysis method to obtain findings; but when they

used a stimulated recall interview to gain deeper insight into student revision, they found that some students felt hedged comments might cause confusion.

*Whether feedback delivery approaches influence students' revision*
Unlike researchers who reported there was a relationship between questions, statements, and imperatives and students' revisions, Conrad and Goldstein concluded that how teachers provided feedback on students' academic expository writing did not consistently affect revision. They found that students always failed to revise complicated problems concerning logic, argument, and development. Similar findings were reported in the work of Treglia (2009). Treglia's results showed that the way feedback was written did not appear to determine the success of revisions; students had problems following comments that required a great deal of decision-making, such as the one asking students to reconsider the logic of their writing.

**A scarcity of a group of "the feedback itself" study**
Because Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti (1997) conducted cross-time, cross-writing assignment, and cross-student analyses of teacher commentary, it seems that they drew a fuller and clearer picture of teacher feedback. According to Ferris et al., teacher feedback varied due to factors such as the point in the semester at which the feedback is given, essay assignments, and student ability levels. Specifically, they found that there was a constant increase in positive comments and hedges over time and that it was the increased teacher sensitivity that caused this increase. Concerning the variation of feedback across students, Ferris, et al. reported that "teachers take a more collegial, less directive stance when responding to stronger students, while focusing more on surface-level problems with weaker students" (p. 175).

Thus far, it appears that scholarship on the cross-time, cross-writing assignment, and cross-student changes in teacher feedback is still limited. Apart from Ferris et al.'s study, Clements (2008) found that his teacher participant's comments became more positive during a course. Best (2011) found that she used less mitigation over a one-year time period. Moreover, it has been found that university ESL teachers varied their feedback focus on ESL and L1 students' writing (Ferris, Brown, Liu, Eugenia, & Stine, 2011). Considering "variability in a teacher's feedback is commonplace" (Goldstein, 2016, p. 415), what has been discovered is still too limited.

**Expanded scope of inquiry**

In recent years, feedback scholarship has expanded beyond focusing on the feedback presented on the pages of student writing to studying why teachers provide feedback in the way they do (Best, 2011; Ferris, et al., 2011; Feuerherm, 2011-2012; Lee, 2008a). Methodologically, apart from text analysis, researchers used more methods (e.g., questionnaire, interview; Ferris, et al., 2011; Lee, 2008a) and qualitative action research (Best, 2011; Feuerherm, 2011-2012) to collect data. It has been found that teachers' feedback practice was influenced by the following student-, teacher-, and context-related factors: student individuality, students' writing problems, students' reasons for writing, teacher knowledge of what students need and how to help them, teachers' beliefs in good writing and the purpose of English writing practice, teaching loads, lack of training or preparation for working with L2 students, teacher-student relationships, institutional constraints, examination culture in the EFL teaching and learning contexts, institutional appraisal of teacher performance, and expectations of parents and students (e.g., Ferris, et al., 2011; F. Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2008a).

**Studies about the feedback itself: A summary**

As mentioned above, the expanded scope of inquiry related to "the feedback itself" studies indicates that researchers have begun to move away from looking at teacher commentary as something largely textual to looking at why teachers provide feedback in the way they do. In fact, nowadays, why teachers comment the way they do has begun to be investigated through the cognitive window. In the section that follows, the studies that adopt a cognitive perspective and are devoted to "teacher cognition" are reviewed.

**2.3.3 Research strand 3: Feedback studies about teacher cognition**

Feedback studies about teacher cognition only have a history of about 10 years (Goldstein, 2016). Generally, this line of limited research has mainly examined (mis)matches between teacher beliefs and practices in teacher feedback, and the findings available presently are not completely consistent.

Diab's (2005b) findings, obtained from an ESL teachers' feedback, think-alouds and teacher interview, indicated that her feedback practice corroborated her beliefs

concerning the necessity to provide content-level feedback. However, according to Lee (2008a), some teachers believed that students had problems in content and organization; but responding to errors had taken up so much of their energy that they did not have time to comment on issues other than grammar and vocabulary.

Ferris (2014) conducted a study that was broad in terms of participant identities. Both L2 and L1 teachers were invited to participate in her study (129 survey respondents and 23 interview participants). As to the belief-practice matches, she reported both matches and mismatches. On the one hand, in her study, the teachers' beliefs regarding the importance of providing feedback on "higher-order concerns" (content and organization) and offering suggestions in end comments were confirmed by their responding behaviors. On the other hand, the teacher participants considered that they had the ability to apply their feedback beliefs to practices, but it turned out that they were not good at it in actual practice.

In Junqueira and Payant's (2015) single-case study, the researchers reported a novice teacher's belief-practice mismatch and match. As to the mismatch, the teacher believed in the importance of non-error feedback, but in practice, she provided a large amount of error feedback. As to the match, the teacher's philosophy that it was necessary to give explanation comments on content/organization and her practice showed consistency. Furthermore, Junqueira and Payant (2015) found that the teacher's feedback practice was influenced by contextual factors, such as workload, time constraints, and lack of space to offer explanation.

In a Chinese university-level EFL expository writing context, Z. Wang (2011) focused her attention on the teacher's beliefs and practices regarding providing discourse feedback (i.e., feedback on cohesion, meta-discourse, macro-structure, topical development, rhetorical function development and purpose, and audience and context of situation), and she mainly reported belief-practice consistencies. According to Z. Wang, the teacher believed it was necessary to give most of her attention to discourse because it met student needs, and it had successfully helped her other students before. Consistently, in practice, 60% of the teacher's feedback was devoted to discourse feedback. However, a table presented in Z. Wang's paper indicated that there was a lack of belief-practice consistency in the teachers' beliefs

and practices regarding how to provide feedback (e.g., providing negative or positive feedback). Z. Wang provided the following reasons why there were mismatches between the teacher's beliefs and her "feedback strategies": the teacher's consideration into student expectations and motivation, a lack of feedback guidelines to follow, and a lack of self-confidence.

Min (2013), as a teacher researcher (teaching English majors' academic writing), reported that her beliefs and practices exhibited good matches at the beginning of a semester and by the end of the semester even though her beliefs changed. Over the course of one semester, Min's feedback philosophy shifted from believing in the importance of providing explanation, suggestions, and specific feedback to realizing the importance of commenting as a probing and collaborative reader. To a large extent, her actual responding behaviors at the two points of a semester typically signified the stances she took. At the end of the semester, Min began to assume the role of a probing and collaborative reader and increased the amount of feedback that clarified student intentions.

Although the "teacher cognition" research is still limited, it answers the call of Borg (2003) to study language teaching in relation to teacher cognition. The emergence of this strand of research also suggests an increased maturity and complexity in researchers' understanding of teacher feedback. For example, Min's (2013) study emphasized the dynamic nature and the fluidity of teacher feedback, pointing to the trend to understand it as a dynamic, contextualized concept. In the following section, a more complicated strand of research is reviewed.

### 2.3.4 Research strand 4: Studies about the feedback-and-response process

The significance of the fourth strand of "feedback process" research is that the researchers are no longer restricted to thinking about feedback as something simple and static. Nowadays, two types of "feedback process" studies have been launched. They are studies about the feedback-and-revision process (Clements, 2008; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein, 2006; Lee & Schallert, 2008a) and studies about the feedback-and-interpretation process (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). Below, the complex, dynamic feedback-and-revision process is outlined first and then Hyland and Hyland's study about the feedback-and-interpretation process is reviewed.

**The feedback-and-revision process: Messiness and dynamics**

All the "feedback-and-revision process" studies reveal the "messiness" of teacher feedback. Building on Ferris' (1997) study, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) focused their attention on the connection between successful revision and the teacher's feedback in the form of questions, statements, imperatives, hedges, and requests. They found that there was no strong relationship between students' revisions and how teacher feedback is delivered; and they also identified the following factors that interactively played a role in the feedback-and-revision process: teacher/student beliefs, teacher consideration of student knowledge, students' interpretation of teachers' role as feedback provider, in-class instruction, and time pressure.

Goldstein's (2006) studies demonstrated two complex processes different from the above one. In one process, the following factors came together and influenced student revision: feedback clarity, student knowledge, motivation, time, course requirement, and classroom instruction. However, in the other process, grading policies, time pressure, and how the teacher and student constructed each other during the feedback process came together.

Lee and Schallert's (2008a) study revealed that, during the feedback-and-revision process, the teacher's provision of feedback was influenced by the teacher's motivation and confidence to provide feedback, the quality of the first draft and the students' use of feedback was influenced by the grade the teacher provided on the first draft, the student's attitude towards the teacher, student reactions to feedback on drafts and grade, and the substance and tones of teacher comments. Most importantly, both the teacher and the students were influenced by the trusting relationship between them.

In Clements's (2008) study, the researcher summarized the messy feedback-and-revision process the teacher and the students went through as a process influenced by a complex interaction of personal, professional, institutional, and pedagogical factors. Beyond this, Clements's study highlighted the dynamics of the feedback-and-revision process. The following evidence clearly points to this nature. As indicated in Section 2.3.2, in Clements' study, the teacher's feedback beliefs and practices underwent a

process of change during the course. What is more, the teacher's feedback adapted in response to practical demands (e.g., short course), and his sense of individual students' personalities and needs.

**The feedback-and-interpretation process**

Thus far, only Hyland and Hyland (2006a) have studied the feedback-and-interpretation process. By focusing on the interpersonal dimension of teacher feedback, Hyland and Hyland took a preliminary look at the feedback constructing and interpreting process. They described how two ESL teachers, with establishing social harmony with their students in mind, focused on five main areas (the students' ideas, language, academic conventions, the writing process, and global issues) of students' academic writing, and provided praise, criticism, suggestions, and unmitigated feedback. The study revealed how teachers' interpersonal concerns, teachers' "conceptualization" of the students (i.e., teachers' consideration of student strengths/weaknesses, student personality, student knowledge/problems/needs, students' possible response to teacher feedback, etc.), and contextual factors (e.g., institutional context in which the teacher worked, in-class instruction, etc.) mediated the teachers' construction of feedback. However, in their paper, Hyland and Hyland only briefly reported the students' "interpretation" of teacher feedback. To be exact, it was only the students' perceptions and evaluations regarding their teachers' positive feedback (e.g., good but not most needed, or insincere and worthless), criticism (e.g., demotivating), and mitigated comments (not understandable or partly understandable) were reported due to the space limitation of the book.

### 2.3.5 Review of empirical literature: A summary

A review of the literature demonstrates that, in each strand of feedback research, there are still questions that remain underexplored or unexplored. However, the strand of research that investigates the complex feedback-and-response process is likely to be an area that requires the significant efforts of researchers. The reasons for this position are twofold. The theoretical reason is that new research along this line will more directly help clarify the complexity and the dynamics of teacher feedback, which in turn affords a greater possibility to advance our understanding of teacher feedback. Empirically, more in-depth and precise studies that address the complex, reciprocal, interacting processes of feedback are still needed (Goldstein, 2016).

## 2.4 Generation of three RQs

In Section 2.3.5, the great necessity to extend the feedback-and-response process was justified. Furthermore, I chose to follow Hyland and Hyland (2006a) to investigate the feedback-and-interpretation process (rather than the feedback-and-revision process). This choice was made for two reasons. First, when the writing is returned to the students with comments, it is impossible for them to move on to revision without processing or interpreting teacher feedback first. As such, investigating the feedback-and-interpretation process can lead to a better understanding of student revision. The second reason was related to the research focus: non-error feedback. As argued in Section 2.1, feedback studies that go beyond surface-level errors are lacking and it is worthwhile investigating non-error feedback. As to non-error feedback, students may only read and cognitively process it, but do not or cannot actually act on it. Given revisions may only take place in students' minds as they interpret teacher feedback, the pressing need for studying the feedback-and-interpretation process (rather than the feedback-and-revision process) can be justified.

Despite the commonality, Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) study and my study had **three** key differences. **First**, instead of focusing on the interpersonal aspect of the feedback-and-interpretation process, my study mainly looked at the teacher's and the student's cognitive decision-making during the feedback process (RQ1 and RQ2, as shown at the end of this section). My focus on teacher decision-making (RQ1) was chosen for two main reasons. Most importantly, there was a theoretical reason for looking at teacher, as well as student decision-making. That is, it was in line with the sociocultural and sociocognitive perspectives on teacher feedback, which both consider cognition as an issue of central importance. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006a), teachers' decision-making that underlies their feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches is a key issue. The other reason was that the available research on L2 teachers' decision-making is mainly related to classroom teaching (e.g., Nunan, 1993; Woods, 1996, 2006), test rater's evaluation of writing (e.g., Cumming, Kantor, & Powers, 2002), and peer review (e.g., Ma, 2010, 2012). Investigations of decision-making of teachers, who act as feedback providers, are still scant.

As to my focus on student decision-making (RQ2), it was identified mainly because Hyland and Hyland (2006a) considered it underexplored but just mentioned it very briefly in their paper. My study aimed to overcome this weakness. More specifically, my study mainly addressed how students make decisions regarding their acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback when they process it. Investigating what is taking place in students' minds when they decide to accept and incorporate teacher feedback will contribute to our understanding of students' readiness to use teacher feedback to make revision, which will in turn help the teacher provide the right kind of scaffolding. Moreover, as indicated in Section 2.3.1, findings related to students' understanding and acceptance of teacher feedback are still inconsistent and insufficient.

Here, it is important to note the following detail: I decided to focus on the teacher's decision-making process while they are adding comments to student texts. According to Huot (2002), the process of providing feedback includes two essential procedures: 1) reading the student's text and 2) adding comments to the student's text. The latter procedure has drawn my attention because, when adding comments to students' texts, teachers may re-read the texts. That is to say, it is possible that when teachers are adding comments to students' texts, what they undergo may be more cognitively complicated. By focusing on this more complicated decision-making thought processes, it is very possible that richer information and data can be gathered.

**Second**, unlike Hyland and Hyland (2006a), in my study, student interpretation (processing) and student perceptions of teacher feedback were clearly distinguished, and student perceptions of the helpfulness of teacher feedback were addressed in a separate research question (RQ3, as shown at the end of this section). There were two main reasons for my investigation of RQ3. A major reason was that, considering there was a great interest in student perspectives on teacher feedback in the past, my study continued to investigate students', as well as teachers' perceptions of the helpfulness of the feedback-and-interpretation process. Meanwhile, according to Goldstein (2005), whether L2 teachers' "text-level" (non-error) feedback can help students is a crucial question L2 teachers have.

**Third**, as can be seen in Section 2.3.4, Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) study focused on ESL students' academic expository writing. According to Goldstein (2016), looking at teacher feedback and student revision in EFL settings is a welcome direction. As such, I chose to add to this research with an exploration of EFL students' non-academic expository writing. Considering feedback studies conducted in the Chinese EFL context is still scarce, my study focused on the Chinese EFL student population.

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, in the Chinese EFL setting, English expository writing is the genre that is most frequently learnt and used (Zhang, 2000). The following is the typical structure of non-academic expository writing that Chinese EFL students usually follow:

- ***Introduction:*** *A good teacher needs to be understanding to all children.*
- ***Argument:***
    - *He or she must be fair and reasonable.*
    - *The teacher must work at a sensible pace.*
    - *The teacher also needs to speak with a clear voice so the children can understand.*
- ***Conclusion:*** *That's what I think a good teacher should be like.*
                                                           *(Hyland, 2002, p. 62)*

In general, to master skills and competence in dealing with the expository, Chinese EFL students need to learn how to open and conclude expository writing and how to use techniques like details, specific instances, comparison/contrast, and cause and effect to set forth arguments and expound on ideas (Connors, 1985). Due to the obvious relevance of teacher feedback on these organization-related, argumentation issues to Chinese EFL students' learning of expository writing, my study chose to focus on **teacher feedback on various issues of expository argumentation** (EA) and how teacher feedback on EA is delivered.

In brief, from the review of literature and the above analysis, the following RQs were generated:

- **RQ1**: When writing feedback, how does the Chinese EFL teacher decide what EA concerns to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback?
- **RQ2**: When processing the teacher's EA feedback, how does the Chinese EFL student decide the extent to which it is accepted and incorporated?

- **RQ3**: According to the student and the teacher, to what extent does teacher-student interaction through EA feedback help students improve, if the interaction is considered effective?

## 2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a review of the literature about teacher feedback and L2 writing over the past 40 years, covering a discussion of the seminal publications, conceptual thinking development, and typical empirical studies. This discussion has helped to identify the areas worthy of further exploration and highlighted a new direction for investigation. Based on the trends and gaps that have emerged from the literature, this chapter argues that: 1) Studies on non-error focused feedback are scarce; 2) It is necessary to define teacher written feedback as a complex, dynamic system from the sociocognitive perspective; 3) Theoretically, research into argumentation feedback is important and necessary; and 4) More studies are needed in the Chinese EFL context. More specifically, this review argues that it is worthwhile continuing Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) strand of research about the feedback-and-interpretation process and explains the three RQs addressed in this study were generated. In fact, two research methods Hyland and Hyland used in their study, think-alouds and retrospective interviews, have been used in the current study as well. Further explanation as to why they were used in my study and more information about how my study was conducted is to be provided in the following methodology chapter.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## 3.0 Introduction

Methodologically, my study employed a case study approach to conducting research. This chapter is devoted to explaining this approach. It begins with the rationale for choosing a case study design (3.1). Then, a precise definition of what case study research means in my study is provided (3.2). After that, how the research site and cases were selected is described, along with how the data were collected, organized, analyzed, and evaluated (3.3). Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the main points addressed in this chapter (3.4).

## 3.1 Rationale for using a case study design in my study

According to Hood (2009), the decision of whether to conduct case study research or not is based on careful consideration of "the object of the study, what the researcher wishes to learn about it, and what he hopes to do with the findings" (p. 72). Taking these three issues into account, the rationale for using a case study design in my study can be established. The following illustrates the rationale with reference to these three issues.

1) *The object of the study*

   As detailed in previous chapters, my study aimed to understand the feedback-and-interpretation process. According to van Lier (2005), processes can be adequately researched in case study research. Duff (2008) also pointed out that researchers can focus on tracing processes that students/teachers participate in in a case study. As such, a case study research design is well suited to reaching the goal of my study.

2) *What the researcher wishes to learn about the object*

   According to the focus of the RQs, my study sought to explore the cognitive aspect of the feedback-and-interpretation process, that is, the decision-making thought processes that the teacher and the student (i.e., the cases) experience when they provide/interpret EA feedback. According to Schramm, case study research can "illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (as cited in Yin, 2014, p. 12). In this way, this approach is tailor-made for my study.

*3) What the researcher hopes to achieve with the findings*

My study was conducted in the hope that it would extend the research base on the feedback-and-interpretation process. Considering little research has examined this process, my study was exploratory in nature. According to most case study experts (e.g., Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2008; Liamputtong, 2009; Yin, 2009), case study research can provide good answers to studies that explore anything that is little understood.

## 3.2 Defining my study as a case study

As it is impossible to conduct a case study without defining what it is, in what follows, a definition of what case study research refers to in my study is offered. According to Hood (2009), a simple definition of case study research is "elusive" (p. 68). To clearly define it, a full description of it is offered in the next few pages. It is based on the definitions and descriptions provided by leading case study methodologists in applied linguistics (e.g., Casanave, 2010; Duff, 2008; Hood, 2009; Johnson, 1992; Mckay, 2006; Nunan, 1992; Nunan & Bailey, 2009; van Lier, 2005). In turn, the issues to be described and explained are:

- the "case" in my study (3.2.1),
- the purposes of my study as a case study (3.2.2),
- special defining features of my study as a case study (3.2.3), and
- the philosophical underpinnings of my study as case study research (3.2.4).

### 3.2.1 The "case" in my study

As the term "*case study*" suggests, at the heart of it is the "case". In the field of applied linguistics, case study methodologists generally talk about the "case" in two ways. For one, most methodologists consider the case as a bounded system, which is composed of an individual (or institution) and a site that includes the contextual features which can inform the relationship between the two (Hood, 2009). For another, case study theorists like Johnson (1992) have defined the case as a unit of analysis. Johnson pointed out that in L2 research, a case, or a unit of analysis, could be a teacher, a classroom, a school, an agency, an institution, or a community. My study brought the two definitions mentioned here together, suggesting that the "case" is a unit of analysis (often a real-life entity, such as an individual learner/teacher or

several learners/teachers) around which there are boundaries in time, place, processes or context (Creswell, 2013).

As already mentioned in Section 3.1, my study was to understand the feedback-and-interpretation process. To achieve this aim, the teacher and the student who participated in the process were both needed to be studied. That is to say, in my study, it was the teacher-student pair (i.e., the feedback provider and feedback recipient pair) that constituted a unit of analysis or a case. In Yin's (2004) words, this type of case study is an "embedded" case study. It contains a single unit of analysis as the main subject of study and its dyadic partners as the "subunits" (p. 113) of analysis.

### 3.2.2 Purposes of my study as a case study

According to Creswell (2013), to define case study research, it is necessary to clarify its intent. Methodologists in applied linguistics appear to have reached a consensus on the purposes of conducting case studies (e.g., Duff, 2008; Johnson, 1992; van Lier, 2005). They have agreed that the purpose is to provide insights into the complexity of a case or "an issue/problem using the case as a specific illustration" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). In Johnson's (1992) words, the purpose of case study research is "to understand the complexity and dynamic nature of the particular entity, and to discover systematic connections among experiences, behaviors, and relevant features of the context" (p. 84). Duff (2008) further pointed out that Larsen-Freeman's (2012) complexity theory, which argues for an in-depth and holistic perspective to look for nonlinear interacting relations among variables/factors within a complex system (such as a case in applied linguistics), provides a philosophical base for the above-mentioned case study methodologists' common position.

Given the consensus among methodologists and their position's solid relation to Larsen-Freeman's (2012) complexity theory, my study shared the view that the purposes of case study research are to build a complex picture and gain a holistic, in-depth understanding of a case or an issue (usually language teaching/learning process, and language development process in applied linguistics) through exploring and explaining the complex dynamic interactions among variables/factors within the case or within the issue.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the purposes of case study research, Hood (2009) classified case study research as intrinsic case study research and instrumental case study research. The interest of the former type "lies purely in one particular **case** itself" (p.69) while the latter type seeks to study a case "with the goal of illuminating a particular issue, problem, or theory" (p. 70). Apparently, my study was an instrumental case study. This is because the goal of my study was to illuminate the issue of the feedback process through studying the teacher-student dyad as a case.

**3.2.3 Special defining features of my study as a case study**

According to Merriam (2009), the case study needs to be further defined by its particular features. Based on Duff's (2008) and other case study methodologists' intensive discussion of case studies, my study, as a case study, has the following defining features.

1) According to Duff (2008), the case in applied linguistics is usually an individual language learner/teacher, but sometimes more than one participant constitutes the cases. To produce more insights into the feedback-and-interpretation process, my study chose to study several cases (See Section 3.3 for more information).

2) Duff (2008) pointed out that contextualization is a key characteristic of a case study. That is to say, in a case study, to better understand the case study participants and answer RQs, it is necessary to carefully look at and keep in mind the boundedness of the case, or the context in which the case is situated or acts. My study described the schooling, teaching, course and personal contexts in which my study took place (See Section 3.3 for more information) and it also used background interviews to capture contextual data particularly.

3) It is generally considered that case study research provides researchers with an opportunity to use various sources of data, such as "interview data, narrative accounts, classroom observations, verbal reports, and written documents" (McKay, 2006, p. 71). My study used different sources of data and collected interview data, verbal reports, and written documents (See Section 3.3 for more information)

4) Case study research is also considered as research that can triangulate data collection. This multi-instrument/perspective approach, or triangulation, is useful to cross-check information and provide a more complete picture for each investigation in case studies. My study cross-checked information not only by triangulating methods and but also by conducting quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

5) Case study research is often longitudinal because the number of cases is always small (Duff, 2008; Johnson, 1992). My study is a longitudinal one and lasted a semester (18 weeks).

6) Yin (2015) classified case study research into three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case study research. Duff (2008) believed that an exploratory case study can open up new areas for future research; a descriptive case study can present a complete description of a phenomenon; and an explanatory case study can

explain how events happen. As mentioned in Section 3.1, as little research has examined the feedback-and-interpretation process, my study is largely an exploratory case study.

### 3.2.4 The philosophical underpinning of my study as a case study

Generally speaking, case study research is often undertaken and discussed as a form of interpretative qualitative research. However, most case study methodologists also agree that it is not exclusively concerned with qualitative methods and analysis (Casanave, 2010; Dörnyei, 2007; Duff, 2008; Hood, 2009; Nunan, 1992; van Lier, 2005). They argue that qualitative and quantitative data and analysis can both be included in case study research. My study follows the lead of these leading case study methodologists, considering case study research primarily as a form of qualitative and interpretative study. However, as it is compatible with both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis, it is not a purely qualitative study in nature.

As to the fact case study research does not fall cleanly within the domain of either a qualitative or quantitative study, methodologists generally believe what underlies it is not a worldview that contrasts (post)positivism and interpretivism/constructivism (i.e., objective or subjective construction of knowledge or social phenomena; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as a dichotomy. In their view, the stance case study research takes is that there is a continuum between (post)positivism and interpretivism/constructivism and the case study is situated somewhere on the continuum (Duff, 2008). In line with this philosophical viewpoint, my study considers that case study research, including the one I did, falls somewhere toward the middle of this continuum, but more on the interpretative side and less on the (post)positivist side.

In brief, by heavily drawing on the frequently cited works of case study methodologists and by explaining the most crucial issues that concern case study research (the notion of a case, its purposes, its special characteristics, and its philosophical underpinnings), what case study research meant in my study has been established. In the following section, how the case study was implemented is described.

## 3.3 Key methodological details

Based on the above-outlined understanding of my study, this section sets out

1) selection of the research site,
2) selection of cases,
3) research contexts (larger schooling context, teaching and course context, and personal context of the cases),
4) data-collection methods,
5) research instruments,
6) data-collection procedures,
7) data treatment,
8) the roles of the researcher,
9) research ethics, and
10) the issues of validity and reliability in my study.

### 3.3.1 Selection of research site

One well-reputed university in China (sitting around No. 50 according to the 2018 Shanghai Ranking, which evaluated 600 universities in China), with which I had already worked for more than ten years before leaving for New Zealand to pursue my doctoral studies, was chosen as the research site for this study. According to Duff (2008), researchers can rely on their familiarity with the site and their "insider" status to ease the difficulty of "gaining entry to the research context and access to the case… for a longitudinal study" (p. 117). My connection with this university and my familiarity with the course content, the instructors in the School of Foreign Studies at this university, and students' proficiency levels and abilities are the main reasons why this university was selected as the research site. Below, it is referred to as KEY, a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the participants.

### 3.3.2 Case selection and sampling

As already mentioned, my study was an "embedded" case study and the teacher-student pairs constituted the cases, or the units of analysis. To select the unit of analysis, my study primarily followed Creswell's (2013) advice to choose accessible cases who are willing to take part in the study voluntarily. This is because case study research usually extends over a long period of time, and the potential cases' voluntary participation can reduce the possibility that "there is attrition [loss of participants] among the participants" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 152).

As for the selection of the main case, the teacher participant, it proceeded as follows. Several years ago, the School of Foreign Studies at KEY established the Research

Centre for Applied Linguistics. With a purpose of recruiting the teacher participant, I attended a workshop on English language teaching organized by the Centre. During the lunch break, I gave the members of the Center a brief introduction of my study and invited them to participate in my study. To capture rich data, I informed them that teachers whose feedback beliefs and strategies were particularly related to non-error issues were needed. One teacher (simply referred to as Teacher T, she, or her in the following for identity protection), whose research interest is discourse analysis, responded to my invitation after the workshop and confirmed her willingness to participate in my research.

When selecting student participants, two main issues were considered: the number and the way to invite participants. Based on Creswell's (2013) suggestion that no more than four or five cases should be recruited, I chose to invite four student participants. They were approached during my visit to Teacher T's classrooms. With Teacher T's permission, I made a brief presentation of my study to the students at the end of her three lectures (same lecture content, different students) and asked for four student volunteers. Students were also told that they could respond to my invitation via email or telephone call after class if they usually read teacher feedback very carefully and felt interested in my study.

Due to the time limit, the first four respondents to this invitation were invited into my study. However, one of the four withdrew from the study just before it was going to be completed because she was too busy to continue. Thus, in what follows, only three student participants' information is provided. To preserve their privacy and their right to anonymity, they are respectively referred to as Student A, Student B, and Student C in alphabetical order by their family names. In addition, to protect their anonymity, all of them, including Teacher T, have been referred to as "she" or "her".

As participants who are open to speak about their ideas are likely to provide better data, I asked Teacher T for an introduction to these students. T considered that they were all hard-working, but Student A was somewhat introverted. Then, I had a conversation with each of the students but felt our communication proceeded very well. Following our conversation, the students received the Information Sheet and Consent Form (See Appendices B and C); and they were allowed two days for further

consideration. At last, all of them chose to participate in my study and signed the Consent Form. Here it is necessary to note that, as for the students who contacted me afterwards, they were informed that I could not invite more than four participants, but they were free to ask me for help at any time when they had writing problems, and I could read their writing for them if they wanted me to.

### 3.3.3 Research contexts

As explained in Section 3.2.3 (the section about defining features of case studies), contextualization is crucial to a case study, and it is necessary to provide a rich description of contextual factors that surround the case(s) being investigated (Mckay, 2006). To contextualize the study, this section gives an account of

- the schooling context,
- the course and teaching context, and
- the personal context (a brief introduction to the cases from my point of view; more information about personal contexts is to be provided in the following chapter, which was collected from the background interviews).

**The schooling context**

KEY University, though small in size, is a university with a good reputation in China. As gaining admission to KEY is rather competitive, students admitted to it generally have a high level of academic performance and comprehensive ability. KEY has two major campuses: the City Campus, on which about 5,000 postgraduates and the fourth-year senior undergraduates study and live, and the Suburban Campus, which provides teaching, learning and living environments for about 10,000 first-year master's students and undergraduates who are in their first, second and third year of university studies.

At KEY University, School of Foreign Studies (SFS) undertakes the task of helping non-English major students with their English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Like most universities in China, SFS at KEY offers compulsory English courses to non-English majors under the guidance of the national syllabus issued by the Ministry of Education---*the College English Curriculum Requirements* (CECR). Under CECR (2007), university students should attend English class four hours a week for two years.

When my study was carried out, SFS allocated one and half years (three semesters) to teach a course series entitled "*College English*", aiming to improve the students' English abilities in reading, writing, listening and speaking. In the second half of the second year (the fourth semester), to enhance students' motivation to learn English, SFS offered a variety of English courses for the students to select. They included *Academic English*, *Business English*, *American/British Society and Culture*, *English Debate and Speech*, *English Newspaper and Magazine Reading*, and so forth.

At KEY University, before new first-year undergraduates start their university study, SFS usually requires them to take an English placement test. Based on the test scores, the newly-enrolled students are labelled as learners with English proficiency levels A (advanced), B (intermediate), and C (basic). They are then assigned to advanced-level, intermediate-level, and basic-level English classes (i.e., A-level, B-level, and C-level English classes). Generally, most newly-enrolled freshmen at KEY are placed into level B and they need to enroll in courses entitled "*College English II*", "*College English III*", and "*College English IV*" within a three-semester time period. Usually, Teacher T teaches the intermediate students.

**Course and teaching context**

My study took place in the context of a College English (III) course during a spring semester. It was the second semester of the first-year students. This course required the students to attend English classes covering reading and writing (once every week, two hours per week), listening (once every two weeks, two hours each time), and speaking (once every two weeks, two hours each time). The specific setting where I had access to the data of teacher feedback was Teacher T's reading and writing class.

During the semester when my study was conducted, Teacher T taught three classes of more than 120 first-year students (around 40 students in each class). Her lectures were mainly based on the textbook that was used for the course, *New Horizon College English: Reading and Writing (Book III)*. This textbook is one of a book set of six series (*New Horizon College English: Reading and Writing* from Book I to Book VI). It contains a total of 10 units with topics such as western society and culture, love, environmental protection, and so forth. Each unit contains two expository reading passages, techniques for reading and writing expository texts, and

exercises about vocabulary, translation, reading and expository writing. According to the syllabus used by Teacher T and her colleagues who also taught B-level English class, five units must be covered in class and the other five units were assigned as outside-class units taught by students themselves. The selection of in-class units depended on which topic all teachers considered appealing to the students and particularly useful for them to improve their English.

Due to time constraints, Teacher T can usually only assign three writing tasks each semester. In the semester when my study was conducted, T, as usual, assigned three expository writing tasks to the students and asked them to practice different argumentation techniques: 1) making cause-effect analysis, 2) providing examples as supportive evidence, and 3) using whatever method(s) the students learnt from the textbook. Making cause-effect analysis and providing examples to support argument are the writing techniques that the textbook series *New Horizon College English: Reading and Writing* repeatedly touch upon.

It is known that Chinese education is dominated by examinations, and examinations are always considered important by teachers and students (Qi, 2007). The final examination Teacher T's students needed to take was based on the above-mentioned textbooks and the lectures they attended throughout the semester. It was a comprehensive English test to assess students' improvement of all four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The writing section accounted for 15% of the score of the examination paper.

Speaking of examinations, it is also necessary to mention two standardized English tests in China, the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and Band 6 (CET-6) because they greatly influence English teaching and learning in many universities. In China, the National Education Ministry used to use these two tests to evaluate the teaching and learning of College English. Each test includes four main sections: writing, listening, reading, and translation. In the past, taking CET-4 was a requirement for students to obtain BA degree at most universities (including KEY). Although today this is no longer the case, students still consider CET-4 and CET-6 important and useful because many employers prefer hiring the applicants who have achieved high scores on these tests. These two tests are held nation-wide twice each year, one in late

June and the other in late December. At KEY, nearly all non-English major students choose to sit the CET-4 and CET-6 tests.

Although the College English courses are not created to help students prepare for the CET-4 and CET-6, many English teachers in China give special attention to these tests. During classroom instruction, Teacher T also takes the CET-4 test into account. For example, when assigning writing tasks, T usually does not assign the writing topics provided in the textbook, but chooses the prompts used in previous CET-4 tests as the writing topics. In the semester T participated in my study, she assigned the following three CET 4/6 writing topics: "*the benefit of taking part in social practice activities*", "*the importance of reading literature*", and "*reducing campus waste*" (See Appendix N for more information about Teacher T's writing assignments).

Finally, let me point out what the classroom instructions are generally like in China. In Confucian tradition, teachers are usually regarded as transmitters and authorities of knowledge and students are receivers of knowledge (Huang & Shi, 2010). Under the influence of Confucian tradition, even today, teachers in China still lecture most of the time in class, and the teacher-student relationship is vertical or hierarchical, instead of horizontal or equal (Huang & Shi, 2010). Generally speaking, lectures that are mainly based on the textbooks are still the primary form of instruction in colleges and universities, and there is a lack of teacher-student interaction in the classroom.

**Personal context: A brief introduction to the cases from my point of view**
Working as colleagues at KEY for about seven years, Teacher T and I knew each other well. In my eyes, she has developed a specialized domain of knowledge in both English and Chinese as a result of receiving a master's degree in English Language and Literature and a Doctoral degree in Chinese Language and Literature. According to student evaluations of teaching at the end of each semester, she is generally considered as an excellent and competent English teacher who takes her work very seriously. Apart from teaching, when I conducted my research, T also undertook a wide range of administrative duties such as coordinating the work of teachers, organizing staff meetings, establishing an agreed teaching syllabus, and so forth. Table 3.1 provides the basic information about T.

**Table 3.1 Participant profile: Teacher T**

| Ethnicity | Educational background | Experience of teaching | Students | Course | Teaching Hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese | PhD in Chinese Language and Literature | 7 years | More than 100 | *College English III* (Reading and Writing) | 12 hours/week |

As mentioned above, the three students were first-year university students who had just begun their second-semester study at KEY when we met each other. Among the three students, my conversation with Student A before the study showed that she could communicate her ideas effectively and her thinking was insightful. The first impression Student B left on me was that she was confident, ambitious, and very cooperative. During the study, it was confirmed that she was this type of person. Student C was intelligent and had a nice personality. During our first conversation, I found sometimes that she could initiate a new topic to steer our conversation.

Generally, the three students varied from each other in terms of their study areas, and they happened to come from different English classes that were taught by Teacher T. Table 3.2 provides the basic information about the student participants.

**Table 3.2 Participant profile: The students**

| Students | Ethnicity | Age | Year of study | Major | Educational background | English/Writing proficiency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A, B, and C | Chinese | 19 | 2nd semester, 1st year | non-English major | more than 10 years | intermediate |

### 3.3.4 Data-collection methods

As explained in Section 3.2.3, case study researchers can use various methods that are appropriate for their research purposes and RQs to collect data. In my study, the methods that could provide the most relevant data were used to seek information. Table 3.3 summarizes those methods.

**Table 3.3 Research methods**

| | RQs 1 & 2 | RQ 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Methods | background interview<br>think-aloud protocol<br>retrospective interview<br>document data collection | ongoing interview<br>final interview |

This section supplies detailed information about the methods my study used to address each RQ.

**RQ1: When writing feedback, how does the Chinese EFL teacher decide what EA concerns to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback?**

Clearly, the purpose of investigating RQ1 was to explore the decision-making thought processes of the teacher experienced when she was writing EA feedback on student writing. To address RQ1, my study used four methods: think-alouds, a retrospective interview, a background interview, and document data collection.

First, think-aloud protocols were used because, in L2 contexts, think-alouds are one of the few available means for finding out more about thought processes (McKay, 2009) and the method is widely used in studies concerning decision-making (Bowles, 2010). However, the think-aloud method is often criticized because it is unnatural and obtrusive and cannot (may not be able to) elicit all of the cognitive process (Kasper, 1998). Due to this criticism, retrospective interviews were conducted after each think-aloud task. The reason retrospective interviews were chosen to be used after think-alouds was because they can investigate the participants' decision making in L2 research (Nunan & Bailey, 2009), and "supplement any other research method" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 148). In their study, Hyland and Hyland (2006a) also used teacher think-aloud and retrospective interview to collect data.

As explained in Section 3.2.3, my study used background interviews to capture contextual data since in case study research background or contextual information is needed to be gathered. For RQ1, a background interview with Teacher T was conducted. Interviews were employed to collect background or contextual information because they are useful to "get large amount of data quickly" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108) and gain "privileged access to others' lives" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, as cited in Hyland, 2002, p. 181).

Very importantly, my study collected student writing with Teacher T's comments (i.e., document data). Teacher comments were collected because of the necessity to find out what EA-related concerns Teacher T focused on and how she delivered EA feedback.

**RQ2: When processing the teacher's EA feedback, how does the Chinese EFL student decide the extent to which it is accepted and incorporated?**

The same methods used for RQ1 (think alouds, retrospective interviews, background interviews, and document data collection) were used to address RQ2. This is because RQ2 also aimed to gain a good understanding of the decision-making thought processes. For RQ2, document data was also collected, but in this case it was the notes the students wrote down when they were interpreting teacher feedback. However, the amount of such data was not large. In fact, it was unexpected that the students took notes and provided this form of data, since they were only asked to cognitively interpret teacher feedback. As the three students all provided some notes, student data was collected as a type of data to answer RQ2.

**RQ3: According to the student and the teacher, to what extent does the teacher-student interaction through EA feedback help the students improve, if the interaction is considered effective?**

RQ3 focused on Teacher T and the students' experiences about their communication during the feedback constructing/interpreting processes. Interviews were utilized for RQ3 due to the fact that they can provide in-depth insights into people's experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2013; Richards, 2009). According to Yin (2009), case study can study the case at two or more different points in time. My study collected interview data at different times. Ongoing interviews with Teacher T and the students (conducted after each retrospective interview) during the semester and final interviews with them before my study was completed were conducted.

### 3.3.5 Research instruments

According to Murray and Beglar (2009), research instruments are tools such as interview prompts, observation categories, and the like. The tools used in my study include interview prompts (background interview prompts, retrospective interview prompts, ongoing interview prompts, and final interview prompts) and a set of instructions for the think-aloud task. Below is a detailed description of all tools designed for my study and employed over the course of it. All the instruments used in my study were piloted. Due to my pilot study, I developed better instruments and accumulated experience of how to better use these instruments (e.g., sensitive to the hidden messages or special points put forward by the interviewee and asked them to make further explanation; mindful of whether the interviewee was on the right track).

**Teacher/student background interview prompts**

As explained in Sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.4, the purpose of conducting the background interviews with Teacher T and the students was to contextualize the study and seek information associated with what they brought to the classroom, such as Teacher T's specific schedule for the semester, the materials to be used in the classroom, and her feedback-providing beliefs and strategies. In the Literature Review Chapter, a number of teacher factors and student factors that influenced the feedback-and-response process had been identified, mainly including teachers'/students' experiences, beliefs, motivation, and confidence and the teacher-student trusting relationship. The questions raised for the background interviews were primarily related to these factors. Appendices D and E are the English and Chinese versions of the prompts that were used in the background interviews.

**Teacher/student retrospective interview prompts**

As noted in Section 3.3.4, retrospective data for RQ1 and RQ2 were collected for the recollections of the participants' thought processes when thinking aloud. Thus, one of the most important questions raised for the retrospective interviews was to ask the teacher/students to recall and verbalize what they were doing when thinking aloud. The other important questions were mainly used to elicit the participants' more explanations of how they decided to provide/accept each EA feedback. In addition, the participants were asked questions about their plans before providing/processing feedback. Appendices G and H contain the guided questions used in the retrospective interviews with Teacher T and the students (English and Chinese versions).

**Teacher/student ongoing interview prompts**

During ongoing interviews, open-ended questions were asked to encourage the participants to talk about their ideas concerning the teacher-student communication through EA feedback, and the effect the interaction had on the development of their ability to deal with EA-related writing issues and teacher feedback. Three questions guided the ongoing interviews and the interviewees were also asked to further explain their answer. The three guiding questions were: 1) This time to what extent do you think you accepted and incorporated Teacher T's EA feedback? 2) When writing new essays, do you think you (as a writer) will be better deal with the EA issues identified this time? 3) Do you think you (as a feedback receiver) are better able to deal with

teacher feedback next time? As ongoing interviews were usually conducted immediately after retrospective interviews, Appendices G and H also contain the questions for the ongoing interviews.

**Teacher/student final interview prompts**

The final interviews of this study were also conducted to evaluate teacher-student communication and student development. To achieve these purposes, unstructured interviews were conducted to ensure the interviewees could feel at ease and express freely what they thought of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback. In the final interviews, the participants were requested to make overall assessments (about student improvement as writers and feedback receivers after feedback), and separately assess the helpfulness of teacher feedback on various EA issues. In addition, to seek to find the underlying reasons, the participants were requested to further clarify their perceptions. Appendix I provides the prompts for the final interviews (English and Chinese versions).

**Think-aloud instruction protocol**

The think-aloud instructions designed for this study were based on Bowles (2010). Following Bowles, the instructions used in my study involved the following steps:

1) explaining what is meant by "thinking aloud", and its purpose;
2) specifying the language(s) participants are allowed to use to verbalize their thoughts;
3) demonstrating for participants how to think aloud; and
4) giving participants time to ask questions about this method.

Appendix F outlines how Teacher T and the students were instructed to use the think-aloud method.

**3.3.6 Data-collection procedures**

This section provides some important explanations about the data collection (3.3.6.1) and details the data-collection procedures (3.3.6.2).

**3.3.6.1 Some explanations**

Before describing the procedural steps, it is necessary to make the following explanations. First, all the teacher tasks (except Teacher T's think-alouds) were carried out in an office on the City Campus and all the student tasks were carried out in an office on the Suburban Campus of KEY. Both offices were quiet as they were not in use during the semester when this study was conducted. Second, all the

interviews and think-aloud tasks were conducted primarily in Chinese according to Teacher T and the students' preferences, and for the purpose of ensuring their accurate articulation of their thoughts and perceptions. Third, all interviews were audio-recorded. Generally, I used two audio recorders for the same interview and think-aloud just in case one of them did not record properly. Fourth, all interviews were one-to-one interviews and one-off events. Before the interviews with the student participants, drinks and anything else (e.g., pen, hard copies of teacher feedback) participants might have needed were prepared.

Basically, all my interviews involved the following six steps:

1) explaining the purposes of the interview, the topics to be covered, and the interviewee's rights (e.g., to refuse to answer some questions) so as to establish "a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 140);
2) giving the participants time to ask questions;
3) switching on the recorder and entering the interview sessions under the participants' permission;
4) proceeding with questions as naturally as possible;
5) expressing gratitude to the interviewee at the end of the interview;
6) checking and labeling the audio file; and
7) making copies of audio files after the interview.

In addition, the interview and think-aloud sessions were guided by the following principles. First, when conducting interviews, I followed Richards' (2003) recommendation to avoid sticking rigidly to the interview schedule. I followed this recommendation for the purposes of providing the interviewees with sufficient "thinking space" (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006, p. 8) and of encouraging them to offer extensive responses. Second, Walker (as cited in Nunan, 1992, p.152) suggested that sitting side-by-side could often result in a more productive interview than sitting face-to-face. My study followed this principle. However, when the students were thinking aloud, I sat down on a sofa beside the table the student was using. Because of this, the students were less aware of my presence, but I could still hear what they were saying clearly and could observe them. To keep the recording devices unobtrusive when recording interviews and think-alouds, they were positioned where I could easily control them, but out of the interviewee's direct line of vision.

### 3.3.6.2 Data-collection steps

This sub-section describes the procedural steps I took to collect data over the 18-week semester.

1) **When the new semester just started, I conducted the background interview with Teacher T and showed her how to think aloud.**

   Before the background interview, I made a brief presentation of my study again, answered T's questions, and shared with her my idea of going to her classrooms to recruit the student participants. As time was a concern for T, we also agreed that she could perform the think-aloud tasks at home on her own and then sent her recordings to me via email. T also said that she preferred using Chinese (her mother tongue) when thinking aloud and during interviews. She believed that using Chinese was much easier, and she thought in Chinese as well when writing feedback. Additionally, Teacher T allowed me to go into her class to recruit the student participants.

   Then, the background interview and think-aloud protocol training were carried out respectively. Both were guided by the steps designed in advance. During the interview, the presence of a tape recorder did not trigger Teacher T's anxiety since she did not seem to be aware of it. During the think-aloud training session, she did not seem to have difficulty with thinking aloud and she quickly understood how it worked.

2) **The next day I visited Teacher T's classrooms to recruit the student participants** (See Section 3.3.2 for details).

3) **Then, I had a conversation with each potential student participant.**

   Immediately after the potential student participants showed their willingness to join my study, I booked an appointment with each of them so that we could meet and get to know each other better. During our first meeting, all the students confirmed their participation. Student A felt excited as she knew that her experience would be part of a doctoral thesis; Student B said that she would like to offer any help I needed; and Student C believed that she could use this opportunity to improve her writing ability for the CET-4 and CET-6 tests (See Section 3.3.3 for details about these two tests).

4) **I conducted background interviews with the student participants and trained them to do think-alouds.**

   Then, the student background interviews and student training were arranged respectively at the weekends. All students chose to finish these two activities at one time, and each meeting lasted about two hours. The think-aloud trainings also

went as scheduled and planned. To ensure that the students could better carry out think-aloud tasks, I also asked them to consider whether they failed to say what they had thought of when thinking aloud. Only Student C told me that she felt she had such problems. To solve C's problem, I suggested that she could practise the think-aloud method when she was performing some daily routine tasks and try to report all her thoughts during that process. I also told her to contact me at any time if she had more inquiries about this method afterwards. In fact, I shared the suggestions I gave to C with Students A and B as well. At these initial meetings, all students agreed to send me their writing assignment when they finished it each time.

5) **I collected student writing three times (nine pieces in total).**

Each time when submitting their assignment to Teacher T, Students A, B, and C sent their writing to me as well. T and I always received Student B's writing first. In B's opinion, since the writing tasks were not very difficult for her, they usually did not take her a lot of time.

6) **I collected Teacher T's think-aloud files (nine in total).**

Each time after T received student writing, she commented on it and thought aloud at home. Then, she sent me her think-aloud verbalization recordings via email. Together with the think-aloud audio files, I received the student writing she had annotated. Here, I want to point out that the feedback T provided was electronic, computer-delivered feedback instead of feedback written on paper with red pen. She felt that these two modes were not different. She said she used computer-delivered feedback just because it was more convenient and efficient. For example, when using computer, she thought it was handy to use online dictionaries.

7) **I recorded student think-aloud tasks (nine files) and conducted retrospective interviews and ongoing interviews with each student participant (nine files)**.

Each time after Teacher T sent me her feedback and think-aloud audio files, I always contacted Students A, B, and C immediately to schedule appointments for think-alouds and interviews. Due to their busy schedules, Students A, B, and C preferred seeing me on weekends, and they wanted to have these three activities in one meeting. Please note the students had no opportunity to read the teacher feedback until they did the think-aloud tasks.

Generally speaking, Students A, B, and C were able to talk continuously each time as they were reporting their thought processes, and it seemed that they didn't care too much about my presence and the presence of recorders. However, when Student A was thinking aloud for the first and second time, I had to remind her to raise her voice. Student B was prompted once not to just read the teacher feedback while thinking aloud, but afterwards she told me that that was what she was thinking about at that time. Comparatively speaking, Student C could clearly and continuously verbalize her thoughts and had no difficulty with think-alouds.

8) **I also conducted retrospective interviews and ongoing interviews with Teacher T.**

   In total, I collected nine retrospective and ongoing interview files from T.

9) **Before the students left school for summer holidays, I conducted the final interview with each of them.**

10) **During summer holidays, I conducted the final interview with Teacher T.**

In brief, the total resulting data sets I collected are shown in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4 Resulting data set**

| Data | Purposes | T | S1 | S2 | S3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 background interview (audio file) | Contextualizing the study | 1 file | 1 file | 1 file | 1 file |
| 2 think-aloud (audio file) | RQ1 & RQ2 | 9 files | 3 files | 3 files | 3 files |
| 3 retrospective & ongoing interviews (audio file) | RQ1 & RQ2 & RQ3 | 9 files | 3 files | 3 files | 3 files |
| 4 final interview (audio file) | RQ3 | 1 file | 1 file | 1 file | 1 file |
| 5 teacher feedback (text file) | RQ1 & RQ2 | 9 files | | | |
| 6 student notes (text file) | RQ2 | | 3 files | 3 files | 3 files |

### 3.3.7 Data treatment: Transcribing, translating, coding, categorizing, and analyzing data

As mentioned above, my study collected think-aloud, interview, and document data. This section explains how these data were handled (3.3.7.1, 3.3.7.2, and 3.3.7.3).

However, before I proceed, it is necessary to note the following issues. As retrospective interview was used as a supplementary method to supplement think-aloud data in my study, it provided masses of repetitive data. As such, I first compared retrospective interview data with its corresponding think-aloud data to check and specify which portions of retrospective interview data I could leave out. In addition, my study utilized NVivo11, a computer software designed to assist the analysis of qualitative data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 2), to code and analyze data.

NVivo11 was used to deal with data mainly because it could help me see "at a glance, which codes have been used where" (Welsh, 2002, p.5). That is to say, by using it, I could easily link the codes, the coded feedback segments and their sources by just clicking a node from a node tree in NVivo (In NVivo, codes are stored in a virtual container which is called "node".).

**3.3.7.1 Handling think-aloud data**

As McKay (2009) provided a practical step-by-step way to organize think-aloud data, my study roughly followed the process and stages she recommended to organize the think-aloud data. The following describes the stages through which I organized and analyzed the think-aloud data (for RQ1 and RQ2).

1) **Transcribing the think-aloud data**

As discussed previously, the think-aloud data I collected were to provide insight into participants' cognitive decision-making thought processes. According to Bowles (2010), studies framed in cognitivist approaches do not need to use a very detailed transcription system and it is not necessary to give special attention to details such as intonation, timing, pauses, or non-verbal cues. Thus, my transcription of the think-aloud data was a verbatim record of the talk, which was not concerned with detailed features like intonation, sighs of relief, and other information including non-verbal cues. When my transcription was completed, I listened to the recordings several times and double-checked the transcriptions.

2) **Translating the think-aloud data**

At this stage, I tried to keep a verbatim record of the transcribed data. Following Tsui (2003), I conducted a flexible semantic translation when literal translation affected the meaning of an utterance. After translation was completed, I gave Teacher T a portion of my translation and its original Chinese version to read in order to see whether there was any misunderstanding in the transcription and translation. She verified the appropriateness of the content.

3) **Dividing the data into individual thought units or segments, each of which reflected a single thought or idea**

I then divided my data into segments so that each segment corresponded to a unit that stated a single complete idea. According to Ericsson and Simon (1993), a segment may be a single sentence, a clause, a phrase, or even a single word. In my study, there were three types of segments. Table 3.6 summarizes them and provides an example for each type of segment.

**Table 3.5 Types of segments and examples**

| Segment Types | Examples |
|---|---|
| 1. The segment which contained several sentences that expressed one complete idea. | Student C's writing is a mixed writing of narration and argumentation. Yes, narration and argumentation. It is a mixture of these two types. |
| 2. The segment which was one sentence/phrase/clause/incomplete sentence that expressed one complete idea. | Today I have already made an explanation of it in class. |
| 3. The segment which was a coordinate clause (linked by a conjunction such as "and", "or", "but" or "yet") that expressed two complete ideas. | I carefully read her writing yesterday, and now I wrote feedback on her writing. |

After segmentation, I numbered each segment with the coded names of the participants and numerals. Take the following excerpt of Teacher T's think-aloud verbalizations that I segmented and numbered as an example. In this example, "T" referred to the teacher participant; "C" represented Student C; the first number represents it was Student C's first writing assignment; and the second number represents the sequence of the segments.

> "Student C's writing. **(T-C-1-1)** I carefully read her writing yesterday, and now I write feedback on her writing. **(T-C-1-2)** First, it is the problem of writing genre. **(T-C-1-3)** Today I have already made an explanation of it in class. **(T-C-1-4)** Student C's writing is a mixed writing of narration and argumentation. Yes, narration and   argumentation. It is a mixture of these two types.

4) **Importing data into NVivo11**

After numbering each segment, I imported the data into the NVivo software. According to Creswell (2013), a computer program may create a distance between the researcher and data due to the fact that there is a machine between them. To avoid this disadvantage of using software, I usually familiarized myself with the data and tentatively devised codes on paper first.

5) **Reviewing previous feedback-related studies that were focused on decision-making to find whether there were existing coding labels for my study**

According to the Literature Review Chapter, it seems that several previous studies had some relevance to my search. In these studies, labels to code teachers/students' or test raters' thought process were constructed (e.g., Brice, 1995; Cumming, Kantor, & Powers, 2002). However, most of the labels devised in these studies were too general. For example, Brice (1995) coded her students' think-aloud data as "Reading comments/texts", "Describing", "Explaining", "Responding", "Goal Setting", and "Assessing". Because of a lack of information

about what the students were "explaining", "responding to", or "assessing", I could not just apply them to my data analysis. Furthermore, in my study, the teacher's and the students' decision-making thought processes were reasoning, emotional, and behavioral processes. There were no existing coding labels I could use to code the emotional and behavioral processes the participants experienced. As such, inspired by previous studies (e.g., Cumming, Kantor, & Powers, 2002; Han, 2016), I created my own coding tags based on "the information contained in each segment itself" (Ericsson & Simon, 1993, p. 266).

## 6) Labelling the numbered thought units

As mentioned above, the labels I used to code the segmented thought units mainly came from my own data. In fact, I spent months labelling data with codes. To code them, I repeatedly read through the segments of data, and (re)coded the data over and over again. For the segments that were ambiguous or confusing, I usually consulted the context (i.e., the preceding and following segments) and Teacher T to determine how to encode them. The following two examples in Table 3.6 and Table 3.7 indicate how I segmented the think-aloud data from Teacher T and Student A (See Appendices J and K for the codebook used in my study to label the think-aloud data).

**Table 3.6 Labelling Teacher T's think-alouds: A sample**

| Sample of data segmentation | Codes |
|---|---|
| Student C's writing. **(T-C-1-1)** I carefully read her writing yesterday, and now I wrote feedback on her writing. **(T-C-1-2)** First, it is the problem of writing genre. **(T-C-1-3)** Today I have already made an explanation of it in class. **(T-C-1-4)** C's writing is a mixed writing of narration and argumentation. Yes, narration and argumentation. It is a mixture of these two types. **(T-C-1-5)** So, from opening paragraph to the arrangement of the paragraph… **(T-C-1-6)** Certainly, the arrangement of paragraphs can have nothing to do with the issue of genre. **(T-C-1-7)** But the style of some sentences she wrote is problematic. **(T-C-1-8)** Then, I will write a general comment first. That is, pay attention to your style. <{I'm afraid you mixed, misunderstood the style, the genre of this writing task.}> Let me put a crying face emoticon here. <☺> Then, it is，<It is still an argumentation.> | **(T-C-1-1)** read student writing <br> **(T-C-1-2)** point out genre problem <br><br> **(T-C-1-3)** reflect on class instruction <br> **(T-C-1-4)** point out genre problem <br><br><br> **(T-C-1-5)** evaluate student writing <br><br> **(T-C-1-6)** interpret student writing <br> **(T-C-1-7)** point out genre problem <br> **(T-C-1-8)** make a feedback decision |

**Table 3.7 Labelling Student A's think-alouds: A sample**

| Sample of data segmentation | Codes |
|---|---|
| Let me open the word document from the teacher about feedback. **(A-1-1)** "The campus activity that benefits the most. Our lives at college cannot be colorful unless we gets rid of boring courses." **(A-1-2)** "*Try your best to avoid negative comments when writing, and make greatest efforts to convey a positive attitude*." **(A-1-3)** I didn't convey negative messages. **(A-1-4)** What I meant, using a, using a double negative, using a sentence with "unless". **(A-1-5)** This, this is, this should be, this is an issue of language; it is my way of expressing myself. (A-1- | **(A-1-1)** read the text <br><br> **(A-1-2)** read teacher feedback <br><br> **(A-1-3)** state disagreement <br> **(A-1-4)** justify self-written text <br> **(A-1-5)** interpret teacher feedback <br> **(A-1-6)** read teacher feedback |

| | |
|---|---|
| **6)** "Your writing could reflect your state of mind or life attitude, and your writing would influence the reader." **(A-1-7)** This is how I, how I used techniques to increase the influence and power of my language. **(A-1-8)** Avoid negative comments. **(A-1-9)** [Let your readers understand your attitude towards life]. | **(A-1-7)** justify self-written text<br>**(A-1-8)** reread teacher feedback<br>**(A-1-9)** read teacher feedback |

*(Note: The grammar error contained in this text sample was in the original.)*

7) **Asking Teacher T to check the codes**

To protect the participants, I asked Teacher T, instead of a second reader, to select a portion of the data I had transcribed, translated, and coded to double check it. As Teacher T's research area is discourse analysis, after I explained to her how to check the codes I used to label data, she had no trouble understanding and checking how the think aloud transcripts were coded. In cases of disagreement, we held a discussion until a decision was made. Meanwhile, I coded the data at different times and the coding system emerged from many rounds of recoding, which largely determined the intra-rater reliability (McKay, 2006).

8) **Sorting codes into categories and themes**

Then, I further sorted the data codes into categories and groups. In summary, Teacher T's and the students' think-alouds were sorted into two themes: "**teacher involvement/student engagement**" (cognitive involvement/engagement, behavioral involvement/engagement, and affective involvement/engagement) and "**factors that influence decision-making**" (teacher/student factors and contextual factors). The categories I created for grouping codes (e.g., interpreting operations, evaluating operations, justifying operations, etc.) are provided in Appendices J and K due to space constraint.

In my study, two types of acceptance and incorporation of feedback were identified: 1) cognitive and behavioral acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback and 2) emotional acceptance of EA feedback. From the cognitive and behavioral perspective, I used the following codes to label the extent to which Teacher T's EA feedback was cognitively accepted: accepting EA feedback, semi-accepting EA feedback, not-accepting EA feedback, and noticing EA feedback. Table 3.8 lists the labels and its indications.

**Table 3.8 Cognitive acceptance categories and its indications**

| Acceptance Categories | Acceptance Indications |
|---|---|
| accept EA feedback | acknowledgement of agreement |
| | articulation of positive attitudes to EA feedback |
| | articulation of emotional acceptance |
| semi-accept EA feedback | acknowledgement of agreement and questions |
| | acceptance of EA feedback and failure to act on |
| | acceptance of EA feedback from one perspective but not from another perspective |
| | acceptance of part of EA feedback |
| not accept EA feedback | articulation of disagreement |
| | inability to understand EA feedback |
| | failure to notice EA feedback |
| | neither agreement nor disagreement |
| | defensive/offensive reaction to EA feedback |
| notice EA feedback | reading EA feedback |
| | translating EA feedback |

In addition, in my study, the following behavioral operations the students carried on indicated that they attempted to behaviorally incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback: making mental note (i.e., to make effort to pay attention to something so as to remember it later)/memorization, making written note, underlining/highlighting important points, making attempted or actual revisions, and summarization.

**9) Carrying out quantitative and qualitative analysis of data**

Generally, the think-aloud data (for RQ1 and RQ2) mainly took the form of text (instead of numbers). That is to say, reporting the qualitative results could provide good answers to RQ1 and RQ2. However, to triangulate perspectives, I also converted the codes under the theme "teacher involvement/student engagement" into percentages and carried out within-case and cross-case quantitative analyses.

**3.3.7.2 Handling document data**

In my study, the document data I analyzed included

a) teacher data: the feedback Teacher T wrote on student writing (for RQ1 & RQ2), and

b) student data: the notes Students A, B, and C made during and immediately after interpreting teacher feedback (for RQ2).

These two types of document data were organized and analyzed in the following ways respectively.

**a) Handling document data from Teacher T: Teacher feedback**

In my study, Teacher T's feedback built the basis for understanding the participants' decision-making. According to Straub (2000), feedback focus identifies what the

teacher writes on (e.g., on wording, organization, ideas, the writer, etc.), and feedback delivery approaches describes how the teacher writes feedback (e.g., criticism, advice, praise, etc.). Thus, in my study, analyzing Teacher T's feedback referred to looking for the patterns of Teacher T's feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches. I took the following steps to organize and analyze T's written feedback.

1) **Translating teacher feedback**

   I translated T's comments that were written in Chinese into English.

2) **Segmenting teacher feedback**

   Then, I segmented Teacher T's feedback into individual feedback points according to the messages and meaning being conveyed through them (See Table 3.9 for examples). The utterance(s) that expressed one meaning/idea constitute(s) one feedback point. Feedback points in my study usually ranged from a phrase to several sentences in length.

3) **Numbering segmented teacher feedback**

   I numbered all feedback points with names and numerals. For example, "T-A-1-8" represents it was Teacher T's feedback on Student A's first writing and "8" represents it was the eighth feedback point.

4) **Importing data into NVivo11**

   Although NVivo software cannot "do the analysis for the researcher" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011, p. 187), I imported data into it because it has the advantage of allowing researchers to manage and retrieve data easily and efficiently.

5) **Labelling the feedback points**

   I labelled all the feedback points I had numbered. To label Teacher T's feedback focus, I used the feedback checklist Ferris (2007) created for L2 writing teachers, Straub's (2000) classification of feedback foci, and the checklist Ma (2010) developed for analyzing feedback foci as the guidelines for building my own code list. Overall, I used five codes to group Teacher T's feedback foci ("organization-related EA feedback", "content feedback", "style/conciseness feedback", "others", and "error feedback") and six sub-codes to identify her various EA feedback ("feedback on **topic statement**", "feedback on **topic sentence**", "feedback on **cohesion and coherence**", "feedback on **supporting evidence**", "feedback on **conclusion**", and "feedback on **overall organization**"). Table 3.9 provides a sample of how Teacher T's feedback foci were coded.

**Table 3.9 Segmenting and labelling feedback focus: A sample**

| Feedback focus segmentation | Feedback focus codes |
|---|---|
| Literature is always full of deep thoughts and ideas **(T-B-2-1)** (["Ideas" and "thoughts", it is somewhat repetitive.]). It is overt **(T-B-2-2)** (it is great to practice using the words we have learned） that reading literature is an essential part of learning and living. So, it is significant for us to read literature. **(T-B-2-3)** the first paragraph goes directly to the point☺ **(T-B-2-4)** However, I am a bit confused about the logic relationships of the first several sentences. [Based on your logic, we can say reading literature is important because it is a necessary part of learning and everyday life. It is necessary, and then it is important. It seems that this is not logical enough. Besides, why is it necessary?] Try this: Literature is a collection of wisdoms and deep thoughts and the significance of reading literature is wildly recognized. The importance can be illustrated as follows. ) | **(T-B-2-1)** feedback on style/redundancy<br>**(T-B-2-2)** error feedback<br><br><br>**(T-B-2-3)** **EA** feedback on topic statement<br>**(T-B-2-4)** **EA** feedback on cohesion and coherence |

After that, I applied labels to each feedback point to mark Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches. My preliminary labels were based on the categories proposed by Straub (2000). However, when these labels were revisited again and again, I adjusted nearly all of them. Altogether, I used 13 codes to label the feedback points I had segmented (e.g., strengths/problems identification, suggestion, See Chapter 5 for all the codes). Table 3.10 is an example of how I coded Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches.

**Table 3.10 Segmenting and labelling feedback delivery approaches: A sample**

| Sample of data segmentation from T's feedback | Codes |
|---|---|
| Literature is always full of deep thoughts and ideas **(T-B-2-1)** (["Ideas" and "thoughts", it is somewhat repetitive.]). It is overt **(T-B-2-2)** (it is great to practice using the words we have learned） that reading literature is an essential part of learning and living. So it is significant for us to read literature. **(T-B-2-3)** the first paragraph goes directly to the point☺ **(T-B-2-4)** However, I am a bit confused about the logic relationships of the first several sentences. [Based on your logic, we can say reading literature is important because it is a necessary part of learning and everyday life. It is necessary, and then it is important. It seems that this is not logical enough. Besides, why is it necessary?] Try this: Literature is a collection of wisdoms and deep thoughts and the significance of reading literature is wildly recognized. The importance can be illustrated as follows. ) | **(T-S2-2-1)** feedback identifying problems directly<br><br><br>**(T-S2-2-3)** feedback identifying strengths<br>**(T-B-2-4)** feedback combining problems identification, explanation, and revision, indirect feedback |

However, I drew upon Straub's (2000) idea for grouping codes. From the perspective of orientation, I grouped Teacher T's feedback modes into "evaluator-response comments", "instructor-response comments", and "reader-response comments". From the perspective of degree of scaffolding, I followed Straub (2000) as well and used his classification "single-statement comments" and "combination comments" to group Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches. By "combination comments", Straub (2000) meant the joining of two or more

feedback comments the teacher places next to a writing issue (e.g., praise-criticism pair, Hyland & Hyland, 2001). By single-statement comments, Straub (2000) meant the teacher responds to a writing issue with only one feedback comment, instead of one feedback comment followed by another in sequence.

When coding feedback data, I also clearly indicated the language Teacher T used. This is because, in T's view, her choice of language (feedback in English or in her native language, Chinese) was a striking characteristic of her feedback and she quite often used Chinese to construct feedback. Moreover, T often used emoticons, underlining, and highlighting to deliver her feedback as well.

**6) Reviewing the feedback points**

Then, I asked Teacher T to review the feedback points I had segmented and coded. In cases of disagreement, we held a discussion until an agreement was achieved.

**7) Carrying out quantitative analysis of data**

As mentioned above, the purpose of analyzing feedback data involved looking for patterns and building the basis for analyzing think-aloud and interview data. For this reason, it was enough to only conduct a quantitative analysis of data to identify patterns. To achieve this end, I identified code/sub-code occurrences, counted code/sub-code frequencies, and summarized the statistical results related to Teacher T's overall feedback patterns, her feedback patterns across cases, and her feedback patterns across the students' writing assignments.

**b) Handling document data: Student notes/memos**

As mentioned in Section 3.3.4, the data in the form of student notes were limited. Meanwhile, the notes or memos the students wrote were rather brief. Students B and C mainly just used short phrases to keep record of their questions and/or the key points about teacher feedback. Student A's notes were relatively longer (See Appendix M for Student A's notes) and it contained her exploration of the reasons behind her writing problems about argumentation, her reflections on how to better manage argumentation in new writing, and her insights into how to improve English writing.

### 3.3.7.3 Handling interview data

I analyzed data obtained from background interviews (to understand the course context and personal context), the reduced retrospective interview data (for RQ1 and RQ2), ongoing interviews (for RQ3), and final interviews (for RQ3). What follows are the steps I took to analyze the interview data.

1) I used the same steps to transcribe and translate think-aloud data to treat the interview data.

2) I conducted "topic coding" (Richards, 2015, p. 110). That is to say, I first divided the interview materials into passages according to the topics they discussed. Then I coded the passages according to their topics. After that, I brought the passages that had been labelled by similar topics together and used them to answer RQs. Listed in Table 3.11 are the coding topics I applied to my interview materials.

**Table 3.11 Handling teacher/student interview data: Topic coding**

| Types of interview data | Topics ascribed to passages |
|---|---|
| **Background interview** | (1) participant profiles |
| | (2) participants' understanding of feedback |
| | (3) students' previous experiences of receiving teacher feedback |
| | (4) feedback provision/interpretation beliefs (about feedback focus and delivery approaches) |
| | (5) feedback provision/interpretation plans for this semester |
| | (6) participants' motivation and confidence |
| | (7) teacher-student relationship |
| **Retrospective interview** | (1) Teacher T's feedback beliefs |
| | (2) teacher/student factors influencing their decision/making |
| **Ongoing interview** | (1) effectiveness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback |
| | (2) helpfulness of EA feedback on various EA issues |
| | (3) helpfulness for student ability to deal with teacher feedback |
| | (3) reasons behind their opinions |
| **Final interview** | (1) effectiveness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback |
| | (2) helpfulness of feedback interaction on various EA issues |
| | (3) helpfulness for student development as feedback receivers |
| | (4) reasons behind their opinions |

### 3.3.8 Researcher roles

According to Johnson (1992), in case studies, the researchers' role ranges from being "a detached observer, to a participant observer, to an active change agent" (p. 94). In my study, I simply aimed to document the data I obtained through verbal reports, interviews, and document collection. Thus, when collecting and analyzing data, I consciously acted as a detached investigator.

Duff (2008) pointed out that researchers need to clarify their role in the research process. Before the study commenced, I clearly explained my roles in this project to the participants. However, during the process of data collection, the student

participants sometimes asked me questions or asked for my opinions about their writing and teacher feedback. So, although I tried to adopt a detached role as a researcher, I cannot claim absolute detached objectivity. In addition, I aimed to avoid ethical issues in my study. This role I played is to be discussed in the following section.

### 3.3.9 Research ethics

According to Duff (2008), case study research requires rigorous attention to the issues of research ethics. My study was an ethical one because the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved it (Ethics Application Number 15/34). Specifically, to ensure my study was ethical, I implemented the following three principles.

In the first place, I put the principle of informed, voluntary and consented participation into practice. Prior to conducting the study, the participants were informed of the methods, procedures, and research aims through my explanation, the Participant Information Sheet, and my answers to their questions. The participants, who voluntarily agreed to be involved in this study, clearly understood that their role in this project was to provide data through verbal reports, interviews and what they wrote.

Secondly, I used a list of principles to protect participants at various stages. When recruiting the participants to join the study, I informed the participants that there would not be any negative consequences if they withdrew from the study at any time. During the study, I often reminded the participants that "If you happen to talk about this study with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific person associated with this study by name". When gathering data, I also tried to establish a relaxed, comfortable, and trusting relationship with the participants, and offered the participants help at any time when necessary. I was always mindful of the need to avoid causing discomfort or embarrassment or straying into sensitive topics as a result of the study. In general, to ensure their full participation and that they would remain in the study as planned, I treated the participants as "'people' who had feelings, values, and needs" (Elbaz, as cited in Tsui, 2003, p. 76) instead of treating them as research "subjects". When using the data, the principle that all data were confidential was followed, and the anonymity of the participants and their school was

preserved by using code names. To ensure that the study did not in any way compromise the participants, I also invited them to read a portion of the data I had organized and analyzed, and the final report. They could specify the parts they did not want me to include in the final report. When reporting data, I kept alert to the possible harm caused by the publication of results as well.

What is equally important, I applied the principle of collaborative partnership to achieve mutual benefit. Apart from its own intrinsic benefits for the participants (e.g., gaining a deeper insight into personal feedback beliefs and practices, developing a better understanding of the importance of teacher feedback and making better use of it in their future study), the students benefited from my special long-term attention to them and their special attention to the practice of English writing. As for Teacher T, I always tried my best to offer aid when and where help was needed. For example, I read the research proposals and research articles she wrote and provided comments to compensate for the time I requested from her.

### 3.3.10 Issues of validity and reliability

To be evaluated as a high-quality case study and to yield valid and dependable results, my study engaged in the following strategies:

1) using multiple methods to collect data;
2) conducting a one-semester pilot study to trial the data collection methods, instruments, and procedures;
3) continuing the data collection over an 18-week semester;
4) presenting the participants with a portion of data I transcribed, translated, coded, and organized for member checking;
5) coding and recoding data at different times and many times to ensure intra-coder reliability;
6) using NVivo software to increase intra-coder reliability; and
7) reporting sufficient details about the research site, course context, the case study participants, and every methodological decision to the research audience.

According to case study and qualitative study methodologists (e.g., Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2008; Gall, et al., 2005), to augment the trustworthiness and credibility of findings, researchers need to use sound research methods, thoroughness of data collection and analysis (e.g., comprehensiveness of description of setting), and sensitivity to readers' needs (e.g., documentation of entire process). My study gave attention to all these crucial issues concerning the validity and reliability of a case study.

## 3.4 Chapter summary

To ensure the results of a case study "'make sense' to others" (Duff, 2008, p. 179), it is necessary to offer rich information related to the philosophical stance this case study builds upon (more positivist or more interpretative), its cases and their boundaries, the research instruments, methods, and procedures it uses to collect and handle data, and its way to resolve the issue of validity and reliability. This chapter, in turn, has described and explained in detail all these fundamental issues involved in this case study. The next chapter presents the results obtained through this research design and research process.

# Chapter 4 Findings for RQ1

## 4.0 Introduction

To answer RQ1 (*When writing feedback, how does the Chinese EFL teacher decide what EA concerns to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback?*), my study collected and analysed teacher data gained from teacher feedback, a background interview, think-alouds, and retrospective interviews. For RQ1, findings regarding the following issues emerged:

- the micro-level classroom context: what the teacher brought to the classroom (4.1);
- how the teacher read and responded to student writing (4.2);
- the EA issues teacher feedback focused on (4.3);
- how the teacher decided to provide feedback on these EA issues (4.4);
- the approaches the teacher used to deliver EA feedback (4.5); and
- how the teacher decided to use these approaches to deliver EA feedback (4.6).

In this chapter, I report these findings from teacher data. Finally, a chapter summary is offered in Section 4.7.

## 4.1 The micro-level classroom context: What the teacher brought to the classroom

In the Methodology Chapter, general information about the school context, course context, and personal context in which my study was situated has been provided. To more fully contextualize the study, a background interview with Teacher T was conducted. It captured more particulars of the micro-level personal and classroom contexts within which Teacher T's feedback practices took place. As T also articulated her feedback beliefs in the retrospective interviews, this section reports findings from the background interview, as well as findings from the retrospective interviews. It is mainly concerned with the following issues: Teacher T's personality traits (4.1.1), her teaching approaches (4.1.2), her teaching plans and objectives (4.1.3), her relationship with the students (4.1.4), and her beliefs about feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches (4.1.5 and 4.1.6).

### 4.1.1 Teacher T's personality traits

Regarding her personality traits, T said that she was an extroverted person, straightforward and outspoken in nature. As such, she said she usually spoke at a very fast rate and was pretty direct with students and people. With regards to her directness, T associated it with being "rude" and "impolite":

*I tend to be an 'impolite' person. ... I'm simply being direct when speaking in Chinese, and there is no difference in my style when I use English to communicate with people. ... But, I always try to protect their [the students'] self-esteem and prevent them from losing face. But, my style is too direct; I often can't help pointing out their problems bluntly, including the problems that are irrelevant to their English study.*

### 4.1.2 Teacher T's teaching approaches

About her teaching approaches and objectives, T mainly made the following points. She said that she usually organized her writing instruction based on the textbook and her instruction was discourse-oriented. Furthermore, she pointed out that her classroom teaching normally included the following steps:

1) using the writing samples in the textbook to explain the writing technique (e.g., using cause and effect to argue) covered by each unit of the textbook;
2) assigning a topic given in each unit of the textbook and asking the students to write an outline in class;
3) discussing the outline the students write in class;
4) giving the writing assignment topic (usually a CET-4 writing topic) near the end of the class; and
5) discussing and (orally) responding to student writing in class several weeks later.

Apart from these steps, T said that she also spent one or two 50-minute class session(s) every month analysing CET-4 model writing; but at that time she usually focused her attention on explaining the choice of words, diversification of sentence patterns, and other language techniques and issues to prepare her students for the CET-4 test.

Generally, T commented on her teaching methodology in the following way.

*I need to ask my students to write multiple drafts. But there are so many things to do in class, and the class sessions seem so short. In order not to fall behind in our teaching schedule (completion of teaching five units of the textbook in one semester), it is impossible to adopt a process approach to writing instruction. Anyway, ... I usually just follow the textbook, ... It is just not possible to ask my students to write beyond one draft.*

### 4.1.3 Teacher T's teaching plans and objectives

Regarding her plans of teaching writing in the new semester, T said:

> *Considering a new reform of CET-4 and CET-6 is to be launched and the tests are becoming similar to IELTS and TOEFL tests, I am considering giving a lecture on IELTS writing and TOEFL writing this semester. Of course, all my classes aim to lead the students in the right direction for studying English and improve their writing ability.*

### 4.1.4 Teacher-student relationship

In the background interview, T mentioned that she did not know the three students well enough although she had taught them reading and writing last semester as well. Among the three students, T felt Student A was not active and responsive in class. Comparatively, she felt that Students B and C held a positive attitude toward her and her teaching, and she had a sense that her relationship with Student B was the closest. In her eyes, Student B always behaved very cooperatively in class, and Student C's engagement and motivation in class were active. However, in T's opinion, Student B's writing and overall language ability were not as high as that of A and C.

### 4.1.5 Teacher T's beliefs regarding feedback foci

***Teacher T's beliefs: General distribution of her feedback focus***

In the background interview, T clearly pointed out her attention on EA-related issues would exceed that of lexicon-grammar:

> *I usually don't give much attention to surface-level language issues. I just underline the students' grammatical errors, although I often carefully look at their choice of words and building of sentences. I usually give a lot of attention to the discourse-level features such as organizational structure and logic.*

Here, it is necessary to detail the explanations T made about "logic". She said she used the word "logic" as an umbrella term that embraced issues related to logical organization of ideas and logical flow of ideas at different levels. About its importance, her comments were:

> *As far as expository writing is concerned, logic is so important that I want my students to be aware that their writing must be logical. Otherwise, their readers can't understand them.*

***Teacher T's beliefs: Specific distribution of her feedback focus***

In the background interview, T said that her focus of attention covered a range of issues at various levels. At the macro-level of the whole text, she said:

> *I look at the overall organizational structure, looking for whether it is a three-paragraph text that includes the opening, body and concluding paragraph. ... I also holistically look at whether the student writing meets the task requirements, whether it conforms to the exposition genre, and whether it is written cohesively and coherently.*

When it comes to her focus at the paragraph level, T stated:

> *I look at each paragraph entirely as well, including the body paragraph, the conclusion paragraph as well as the opening paragraph. For example, I'll see whether there is too much lead-in information provided in the opening paragraph, and whether this paragraph lacks a sentence summary at the end.*

Moreover, T believed that there were more issues to attend to within paragraphs. Specifically, she pointed out the coherence and supporting evidence issues within a paragraph particularly drew her attention:

> *I feel they have problems with issues like **coherence** and **logic at the local level**. Sometimes they use too many connective words, and their writing reads very awkwardly because of it. Sometimes, they can't organize the **supporting evidence** under each topic and subtopic sentences very well. I'm sure I'll point out these local-level problems. They [These writing problems] are really annoying.*

Generally, when providing EA feedback, T believed that she would constantly focus on issues which included overall organizational structure of student writing, the opening, body, and conclusion paragraphs, topic sentences, supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, and other issues related to "logic".


### Teacher T's beliefs: Sources of her beliefs regarding feedback foci

In my study, a qualitative analysis of teacher interview data (background and retrospective interviews) also produced another layer of findings: the sources of T's beliefs about feedback foci. The interview data revealed that T's beliefs about focusing on logic issues was directly associated with 1) her research area and interest, 2) her knowledge of EFL writers' writing difficulties and students' writing abilities, and 3) her beliefs about what to teach in her writing class.

In the background interview, T pointed out that her feedback beliefs might be influenced by her research area and interest:

> *You know, my PhD work was based on discourse analysis. Although it was a study about discourse in Chinese, my research area and interest probably have a relationship with my focus of attention when giving feedback.*

The background interview data also revealed that T's knowledge of the students' writing problems and difficulties was the other reason why she chose to focus on issues related to "logic". In T's mind, the Chinese and English way of writing and thinking were different, and the difference between them was that *"the Chinese way is circular while the English way is direct and logical"*. Due to this difference, she believed that she would comment on "directness" and "logic" issues since Chinese EFL students were used to composing English writing in a Chinese way, and it was not easy for them to produce English writing that was logically structured. This could be inferred from the following quotes:

> *Most often, they [students] write in a poetic indirect Chinese way. It is illogical, absurd, and incompatible with English expository writing. ... I always provide feedback on these issues, but it seems that there are always such problems.*

In one retrospective interview, T particularly related her belief about focusing on cohesion and coherence to students' difficulties with use of connective words. T said:

> *It seems that proper use of cohesive devices is very easy and every student can use them very well, but in fact it's hard [to use them very well]. So, I frequently marked them in my feedback.*
> *(From the retrospective interview for Student C's third piece of writing)*

Moreover, T connected her feedback belief to the students' inability to make generalizations. For example, in the retrospective interview for Student A's first piece of writing, T said that her students seemed to lack the ability to really give their readers a specific point to focus on and then it was difficult for them to create appropriate (sub)topic sentence. What T said in the interview was as follows:

> *[I focus on this sub-topic sentence] because they often don't write topic sentence or subtopic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, or I can't find them in a paragraph. The reason behind this is that they're unable to give their readers a specific point to hang onto.*

As to what to teach, the other source of her feedback beliefs, T believed that it was necessary to convey the idea that logic was crucial to her students in class or through feedback. The following is what she said in the background interview, which clearly shows that her teaching belief determined her focus on "logic" when she commented on student writing:

> *My students often hear me say these things in our reading and writing class or when we discuss their writing in class. ... I feel they have begun to realize that the logic issues are important since they are the main concerns*

*of my instruction and feedback. … In class we discussed the technique of exemplification, and our writing requirement was to use this technique to develop argumentation. So, when providing feedback, I need to look at their use of it, right?"*

The rhetorical question T asked here indicates that her belief about focusing on supporting evidence was related to her beliefs regarding the focus of her classroom teaching.

Overall, my study found T's feedback beliefs about what to focus on were related to her PhD research experience, her knowledge of student writing problems and difficulties regarding EA issues, and her pedagogical beliefs. Most importantly, T had confidence in dealing with her students' logic, EA-related problems. This is highlighted because she said in the background interview, "*I'm confident in writing feedback on these issues.*"

***Teacher T's beliefs about focus changes across time, students, and writing tasks***
When asked whether there would be any changes in her focus of attention during the semester of my data collection, T answered: *"I have no plan to change my way of teaching and providing feedback this semester. I have used this pattern for years."* T's explanation seems to indicate that her feedback foci were not greatly influenced by the teaching/learning situations, the student writers, or the writing tasks.

### 4.1.6 Teacher T's beliefs regarding feedback delivery approaches
***Teacher T's beliefs regarding her provision of evaluator-response feedback (e.g., problem/strength-oriented feedback)***

In the background interview, T stated she would provide negative, positive and advisory comments. About this, she said:

> *When responding to student writing, I usually look at its negative and positive aspects first, and then based on my evaluation, I'll write down something negative or good, give suggestions, and so on.*

Although T believed that she mainly used feedback to show her students where their writing problems lay, she also said: *"On the strengths of their work, I don't withhold genuine praise."* In T's opinion, positive feedback could motivate student writers, especially when she felt there were quite a few problems in the writing.

T associated her frequent use of advisory comments with her role as a feedback provider. About this, she said: *"Actually, I don't think I can use feedback to teach the students how to do better. I can only point them in the right direction"*. That is to say, when providing feedback, she believed she was a guide and facilitator. Also, she thought, as she was a non-native English speaker, her feedback could not be perfect, so she could just offer students suggestions and help them know that they could write better and get some ideas about how to do so.

With regards to her evaluator-response feedback, T repeated that she tended to write direct and concise feedback comments:

> *I tend to point out their problems directly. Of course, I don't want to hurt their feelings, but I am inclined to write 'You should…' or 'Pay attention to your brevity' instead of 'It would be better if you…'*

### Teacher T's belief regarding her provision of instructor-response feedback (e.g., explanation)

In the background interview, T stated that the students might be *"on the defensive"* and could not think carefully about their problems if teachers only pointed out problems but did not provide explanations. T believed explanatory comments could help the students better understand their problems and accept teacher feedback more easily.

### Teacher T's beliefs regarding her provision of combination comments

In a retrospective interview (for Student A's first writing assignment), T pointed out that she believed that comments that contained a sequence of strength/problem identification, explanation, suggestion, and revision were quality comments because such comments were logical, clear, informative, and complete. In her own words, *"This way of commenting means I'm pointing out the problem, analysing the problem, and providing solutions. Good comments should include this set of information"*.

### Teacher T's beliefs regarding her feedback comments in English/Chinese

In the background and retrospective interviews, T provided the following reasons for her choice of using the Chinese language to write EA feedback (or "logic" feedback

in her own words). First, she felt it could help her students better and more deeply understand her feedback. T said she felt that her Chinese feedback comments could have a deeper impression on the students and raise their attention to their problems. Second, T believed, with regards to the complicated logic issues, it was difficult and troublesome for her to clarify them in English. So, T asked in class whether she could comment on EA issues mainly in Chinese. She and her students reached an agreement to provide/receive feedback in Chinese at last.

### Teacher T's beliefs regarding the changes of her feedback delivery approach

In the background interview, T pointed out that she might write feedback according to student personality and their relationship. She provided the following explanation:

> I'll use more hedges if the students are shy and introverted, and if our relationship is not very close. I would also like to provide them with more suggestions. If our relationship is close, I have less worries about writing something negative. How to deliver my feedback depends. It depends on who the student writer is.

Specifically, T pointed out that she might treat Student A somewhat differently: "*I'll be more careful when writing feedback on Student A's work.*" T related it to A's personality and their relationship: "*Since she is not active and responsive in class, I have no idea about how she thinks about me and my class; I feel I don't know how to communicate with her very well.*"

### Teacher T's beliefs in the usefulness of emoticons ( ☺)

In the retrospective interview for Student B's first piece of writing (about practising cause-effect writing techniques), T explained the reasons why she mainly used the smiling emoticon (☺), and seldom used the crying one (☹). She believed that the smiley face could demonstrate her recognition of the strengths of student writing in a powerful way and motivate students to write better. In her own words: "*I used it to directly and clearly show my recognition of their strengths and achievements. It's very impressive.*"

### Teacher T's beliefs regarding the location of feedback

T expressed her dislike of using the Review Mode in Microsoft Word and her unwillingness to just insert comments in the document margin. She said, "*It [the Review Mode] looks neat and tidy, but I feel it is overwhelming and it is difficult to*

*track and connect the comments with the writing problems.*" T said she would just type her comments throughout the student writing and put them in the position that was within the students' line of sight.

## 4.2 How the teacher read and responded to student writing: A general description

T usually had already carefully read student writing several times before she typed in her comments. When she began to add comments to student texts, T usually scanned the student's whole text again and articulated her general impression. Then, based on her general impression, she first provided general comments at the end of the text (i.e., end comments). After providing end comments, T started reading the student writing sentence by sentence from the first paragraph and inserted in-text comments related to each paragraph and each sentence. When she was typing in in-text comments, some ideas would sometimes occur to her that she believed should be added to the end comments. T usually immediately went back to the end comments and wrote down her ideas. Sometimes, T wrote down a completely new piece of feedback and sometimes she just edited the comments she had already written out.

## 4.3 The EA issues the teacher actually focused on

In this section, the following findings are reported:

1) general distribution of Teacher T's feedback,
2) Teacher T's non-error feedback and EA feedback, and
3) cross-assignment and cross-student changes in Teacher T's EA feedback.

**General distribution of Teacher T's feedback**

A comprehensive analysis of the feedback T presented on student writing shows that over a semester she provided 380 feedback comments on the three student participants' nine pieces of writing. Of these comments, 15.3% focused on surface-level language issues and 84.7% focused on issues beyond language. Table 4.1 below shows the general distribution of T's feedback.

**Table 4.1 Feedback foci: General distribution**

| Feedback focus | Number | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| Error feedback | 58 | 15.3% |
| Non-error feedback | 322 | 84.7% |
| Total | 380 | 100% |

**Teacher T's non-error feedback and EA feedback**

Table 4.2 below presents the issues that were targeted in T's non-error feedback and EA feedback.

**Table 4.2 Teacher T's non-error feedback and EA feedback**

| Foci of non-error feedback | | Number | Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Organization-related EA feedback (210, 65.2%)** | supporting evidence | **103** | **32%** |
| | cohesion & coherence | **42** | **13%** |
| | topic statement | **19** | **5.9%** |
| | overall organization | **17** | **5.3%** |
| | (sub)topic sentence | **16** | **5.0%** |
| | conclusion | **13** | **4.0%** |
| **Content** | ideas | **35** | **10.9%** |
| **Style** | conciseness/redundancy | **36** | **11.2%** |
| **Others** | task completion, genre appropriateness, register, etc.) | **41** | **12.7%** |
| **Total** | | **322** | **100%** |

Table 4.2 indicates that T's non-error feedback (281) was spread across **organization**, **content**, **style** and other issues like genre appropriateness, register, and task completion. Of these, **organization-related EA feedback** had the highest percentage (65.2%), followed by **style feedback** (11.2%), **content feedback** (10.9%), and feedback on other issues (12.7%).

As demonstrated in Table 4.2, T's **Organization-related EA Feedback** included **feedback on supporting evidence** (e.g., relevance and development of supporting evidence), **cohesion and coherence** (e.g., cohesion on connectives, pronominal cohesion), **topic statement** (e.g., its style/directness), **overall organizational structure** (e.g., paragraphing), **(sub)topic sentence** (e.g., its style/directness), **and conclusion**. Among these feedback comments, T's **feedback on supporting evidence** constituted the largest part (32% of non-error feedback) and the percentages of the rest, in descending order of frequency, were 13%, 5.9%, 5.3%, 5.0%, and 4.0%.

In addition to EA issues, content was another concern (10.9%) of T. Her **content feedback** was mainly about the ideas in student writing. T's **style feedback** related only to the issue of **conciseness/redundancy**. In total, T provided 36 (11.2%) **conciseness/redundancy comments**. Also, T gave 12.7% feedback on issues like **register** (e.g., academic formal word choice and informal word choice), **genre**

**appropriateness** (e.g., expository writing and narrative writing), and **task completion** (e.g., achievement of writing requirements).

**Teacher T's non-error feedback and EA feedback: Cross-task changes**

The findings have been presented in Table 4.3. It shows that T provided 67, 83, and 60 EA comments on writing task one (W1, **cause-effect writing**), writing task two (W2, **exemplification writing**), and writing assignment three (W3, **free-technique writing**) respectively. It seems that, over the course of a semester, the total number of T's EA comments on each set of writing assignments remained relatively stable. However, we can still see a slight rise from W1 to W2 and a drop from W2 to W3 in feedback amount.

**Table 4.3 Teacher T's non-error and EA feedback: Cross-task changes**

| Non-Error feedback foci | W1 | W2 | W3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organization-related EA feedback (210) | 67 (65.7%) | 83 (73.4%) | 60 (51.2%) |
| Content (35) | 10 (9.8%) | 12 (10.6%) | 13 (12.1%) |
| Style (36) | 10 (9.8%) | 8 (7.1%) | 18 (16.8%) |
| Others (41) | 15 (14.7%) | 10 (8.8%) | 16 (15%) |
| **Total (322)** | **102 (100%)** | **113 (100%)** | **107(100%)** |

*(Note: W1=the first cause-effect writing task; W2=the second exemplification writing task; W3=the third free-technique writing task)*

**Teacher T's EA feedback: Cross-student changes**

An examination of the cross-student changes indicated that T focused on EA issues when commenting on Students A, B, and C's writing tasks (more than half of non-error feedback); but, comparatively, it seems that she gave less non-error feedback on C's writing and provided more feedback on the other issues (e.g., genre appropriateness, task completion, register) of C's writing (See Table 4.4 below).

**Table 4.4 Teacher T's non-error and EA feedback: Cross-student changes**

| Non-error feedback foci | S1 | S2 | S3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organization-related EA feedback | 85 (75.2%) | 85 (65.4%) | 40 (50.6%) |
| Content | 13 (11.5%) | 13 (10%) | 9 (11.3%) |
| Style | 13 (11.5%) | 14 (10.8%) | 9 (11.3%) |
| Others | 2 (1.8%) | 18 (13.8%) | 21 (26.6%) |
| **Total** | 113 (100%) | 130 (100%) | 79 (100%) |

## 4.4 How the teacher's feedback foci were decided

Qualitative and quantitative analyses of teacher think-aloud and retrospective interview data indicated that T's feedback-focus decisions were mainly

1) informed by her feedback beliefs, and
2) affected by the examination orientation of T's classroom instruction (i.e., for the coming CET-4 test at the end of the semester) and the traditional Chinese educational culture.

This section presents an explanation of these two results respectively.

My study found that, each time when thinking aloud, T usually just reported what she would focus on according to the ideas that had already been formed in her mind and there was no real reasoning behind her focus decisions. Her automatic decision-making indicated that her focus decisions were mainly belief-informed. For example, after T scanned Student A's first cause-and-effect writing assignment (W1) and spoke aloud her thoughts and feelings about it, she immediately announced her focus decisions. Without much formal reasoning, T stated: *"Now let me write comments on her writing; first on the whole text in general and then on paragraphs."*

At the same time, comparing T's feedback beliefs (reported in Section 4.3) with her actual performance, it is not difficult to see that her beliefs regarding feedback foci were inherent in her decisions and her actual feedback practice. In general, there was a match between T's feedback beliefs and practices, and it seems fair to say T's focus decisions stemmed from what she believed.

T's retrospective interview data also showed her decision-making was guided by her beliefs and her decisions to focus on these EA issues had already been made in advance. In each retrospective interview, when asked what non-error and EA issues T had written on, she always repeated the same answer: *"Just as I tell you all the time. Just those organization, logic, cohesion and coherence issues on the entire writing and on the local-level issues."*

T's beliefs about feedback focus were found to be relatively stable over the course of one semester. However, after commenting on the students' first writing assignments, she realized that the argumentation issue in student writing was more problematic than she thought before and her awareness to focus on argumentation issues was heightened. This finding highlights the following points. First, T's focus beliefs were changing over time, although the change was relatively slight. Second, Table 4.3 shows that there was an increase in EA feedback from W1 (65.7%) to W2 (73.4%).

That is to say, probably informed by her changing beliefs, T gave more EA feedback on the students' W2.

As reported in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, T's teaching objectives and plans were closely related to preparing her students for the upcoming CET-4 test. From T's remarks during the retrospective interview for Student A's W1, it was not difficult to see the CET-4 test assessment standards had a direct influence on her focus choices and decisions:

> *[When providing feedback,] First I look for whether the general Introduction-Body-Conclusion format is appropriately used because using this structure to organize writing is a basic requirement of the CET-4 test and the CET-4 test raters usually look at it first. Look at her writing. There are five paragraphs. For a piece of CET-4 test writing, three or four paragraphs are enough and five-paragraphs is too long. So, I decided to comment on it; there are too many paragraphs.*

This result suggests that, when commenting on organization-related EA issues, T adopted a test assessor's perspective. That is to say, her responding practice was greatly impacted by the traditional Chinese examination culture and her motivation to help her students in class improve their performance and achieve good scores on the CET-4 examination.

## 4.5 The approaches the teacher used to deliver EA feedback

In my study, the following perspectives on Teacher T's delivery approaches emerged out of text analyses of the feedback data:

1) the perspectives of orientation and language channel;
2) the perspective of scaffolding degree; and
3) the cross-assignment and cross-student perspective.

This section presents the findings from these perspectives (4.5.1-4.5.3).

### 4.5.1 Feedback delivery approaches: From the perspective of orientation and language channel

Table 4.5 exhibits in detail the different delivery approaches T used to provide EA feedback.

**Table 4.5 Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches: From the perspective of orientation and language channel**

| Feedback delivery approaches | | | Number | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| evaluator-response comments (241, 74.8%) | revision (60) | direct revision | 22 | |
| | | suggested revision | 38 | |
| | problem indication (61) | direct indication | 28 | |
| | | in English | | 6 |
| | | in Chinese | | 22 |
| | | hedged indication | 33 | |
| | | in English | | 11 |
| | | in Chinese | | 22 |
| | strength indication (65) | | 65 | |
| | in English | | | 41 |
| | in Chinese | | | 24 |
| | advice (48) | imperative advice | 32 | |
| | | in English | | 16 |
| | | in Chinese | | 16 |
| | | suggestion | 16 | |
| | | in English | | 2 |
| | | in Chinese | | 14 |
| | questions in Chinese (7) | | 7 | |
| instructor-response comments (68, 21.1%) | descriptive/interpretative comments | | 11 | |
| | in English | | | 2 |
| | in Chinese | | | 9 |
| | explanatory comments (57) | | 57 | |
| | in English | | | 16 |
| | in Chinese | | | 41 |
| reader-response comments (13, 4.0%) | reader-response comments (13) | | 13 | |
| | in English | | | 10 |
| | in Chinese | | | 3 |
| **Total (322, 100%)** | | | **322** | |
| in English | | | | 164 |
| in Chinese | | | | 158 |

Table 4.5 shows, from the perspective of orientation, T provided 75% **"evaluator-response feedback"**, 21% **"instructor-response feedback"**, and only 4% **"reader-response feedback"**. More specifically, in T's evaluator-response feedback comments, there were a large number of **strength-oriented comments** (65), **problem-oriented comments** (61), and **advisory comments** (48) while her **questioning comments** were rather limited (7). It seems that T frequently pointed out what the students had achieved (strength-oriented comments) and she provided a similar number of revision comments (60), problem-oriented comments (61), and strength-oriented comments (65). Findings presented in Table 4.5 also reveal, instead of directly writing feedback, T used more hedges (33) when commenting on the negative aspects of student writing and when providing revisions. In my study, T

usually preceded her revisions with words like *"Here, a possible revision can be: ..."* to mitigate the imposition of her revisions.

T's **"instructor-response feedback"** centred around **explanatory comments** (57), which were mainly used to explain why she considered student writing to be problematic/impressive, and why she commented on or revised student writing in the way she did. Sometimes, T also used **descriptive/interpretative comments** to describe/interpret student writing in her own words (11). Only occasionally did T respond to student writing as a reader, instead of acting as an evaluator or an instructor (4%). Moreover, from the perspective of language channel, T commented both in English and in Chinese. Table 4.5 indicates she gave a similar number of English comments (164) and Chinese comments (158).

### 4.5.2 Feedback delivery approaches: From the perspective of scaffolding degree

From the perspective of scaffolding degree, T's feedback delivery approaches were divided into **single-statement comments** and **combination comments** (e.g., the praise–criticism–suggestion triad; criticism–suggestion pair). Findings obtained from teacher feedback indicated that she wrote out 50 **single-statement comments** and 94 **combination comments**. Table 4.6 shows the number of each type of comments.

**Table 4.6 Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches: From the perspective of scaffolding degree**

| Feedback delivery approaches | | Number |
|---|---|---|
| **Single-statement comments (34%)** | | **49** |
| **Combination comments (95, 66%)** | two-statement pairs | **46** |
| | three-statement triads | **21** |
| | four-statement quaternity | **14** |
| | comments containing more statements | **13** |
| **Total** | | **144** |

### 4.5.3 Feedback delivery approaches from different perspectives: Cross-assignment changes

*Cross-assignment changes: From the perspective of orientation*

Table 4.7 below presents the results about cross-assignment changes from the perspective of orientation.

**Table 4.7 Cross-task changes: From the perspective of orientation**

| Feedback delivery approaches | | | W1 | W2 | W3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| evaluator-response comments (241) | revision | direct revision | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| | | suggested revision | 9 | 13 | 16 |
| | problem indication | direct indication | 13 | 9 | 6 |
| | | hedged indication | 8 | 15 | 10 |
| | **strength indication** | | **9** | **26** | **30** |
| | advice | imperative advice | 14 | 9 | 9 |
| | | hedged suggestion | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| | questions | | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | Total | | 71 | 85 | 85 |
| instructor-response comments (68) | descriptive/interpretative comments | | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| | **explanatory comments** | | **23** | **17** | **17** |
| | Total | | 28 | 19 | 19 |
| reader-response comments (13) | reader-response comments (13) | | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| | Total | | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Total (322) | | | 102 | 113 | 107 |

As can be seen from Table 4.7, there were two typical cross-task changes in T's delivery approaches. First, T provided many more strength-oriented comments on W2 (26) and W3 (30) than on W1 (9). Second, there were fewer explanatory comments on W2 (17) and W3 (17) than on W1 (23).

*Cross-assignment changes: From the perspective of scaffolding degree*

From the perspective of scaffolding degree, the following cross-assignment findings were obtained (See Table 4.8 below).

**Table 4.8 Cross-task changes: From the perspective of scaffolding degree**

| Feedback delivery approaches | W1 | W2 | W3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Single-statement Comments (49) | 16 | 16 | 17 |
| Combination comments (95) | 28 | 32 | 35 |
| **Total (144)** | 44 | 48 | 52 |

As shown in Table 4.8, the quantity of single-statement comments T wrote out on W1, W2, and W3 were almost identical (16, 16, and 17), and the quantity of combination comments on W1, W2, and W3 appeared quite similar (28, 32, and 35) as well. In general, from the perspective of scaffolding degree, Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches did not seem subject to change according to writing assignments.

**4.5.4 Feedback delivery approaches: Cross-student changes**

*Cross-student changes: From the perspective of orientation*

From the perspective of orientation, Table 4.9 shows how T gave EA feedback on Student A, B, and C's writing over a semester.

**Table 4.9 Cross-student changes: From the perspective of orientation**

| Feedback delivery approaches | | | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| evaluator-response comments (241) | revision | direct revision | 6 | 7 | 9 |
| | | suggested revision | 14 | 18 | 6 |
| | problem indication | direct indication | 9 | 14 | 5 |
| | | hedged indication | 17 | 10 | 6 |
| | **strength indication** | | **16** | **30** | **19** |
| | advice | imperative | 14 | 13 | 5 |
| | | suggestion | 9 | 5 | 2 |
| | questions | | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| | **Total** | | **89** | **100** | **52** |
| instructor-response comments (68) | descriptive/interpretative comments | | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| | explanatory instruction | | 18 | 21 | 18 |
| | **Total** | | **22** | **24** | **22** |
| reader-response comments (13) | reader-response comments (13) | | 2 | 6 | 5 |
| | **Total** | | **2** | **6** | **5** |
| **Total (322)** | | | **113** | **130** | **79** |

Table 4.9 indicates that there was a cross-student variation in T's feedback delivery approaches. First, she provided more EA feedback and more positive feedback on B's writing. Second, she gave a smaller amount of EA feedback on C's writing. However, considering that T gave Student C only 79 comments in total, she gave a relatively large number of instructor-response comments to her (22, about 30%).

*Cross-student changes: From the perspective of scaffolding degree*

From the perspective of scaffolding degree, Table 4.10 below summarizes the cross-student findings. T's EA feedback delivery approaches did not seem to change considerably from student to student.

**Table 4.10 Cross-student changes: From the perspective of scaffolding degree**

| Feedback delivery approaches | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Single-statement comments (49) | 15 | 21 | 13 |
| Combination comments (95) | 36 | 34 | 25 |
| | (71%) | (62%) | (66%) |
| **Total (144)** | 51 | 55 | 38 |

**4.5.5 More feedback delivery approaches: Emoticons, highlights, and underlines**

When T provided EA feedback, she often used emoticons (e.g., ☺; ☹), highlights (with colours or in boldface), and underlines. Generally speaking, T mainly used

smiling faces and seldom used crying faces. Usually she placed them at the end of a feedback comment. Regarding highlights and underlines, Teacher T mainly used them to indicate the issues her comments addressed.

## 4.6 How the teacher's feedback delivery approaches were decided

As indicated in 4.4, T's decisions about her feedback foci were mainly belief-informed and they were often made before she commented on student texts. As to T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback, my study found that they were usually formed when she was reading/scanning the student's writing paragraph by paragraph and sentence by sentence (or sentence cluster by sentence cluster) and adding comments to them. Specifically, in relation to how T's feedback delivery approaches were determined, the following key findings emerged from teacher data:

1) T's decisions were formed as a result of the interaction among her **cognitive**, **behavioural**, and **affective involvement** during feedback provision, and
2) **Teacher factors and contextual factors** influenced the formation of T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback.

In this section, the above-mentioned findings are reported in turn (4.6.2 and 4.6.3). However, before providing answers, I first explain T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback provision (4.6.1). This explanation contextualizes the answers reported in the sections following it.

### 4.6.1 Teacher T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback provision

In this section, I first use an example to describe Teacher T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback provision and explain the formation of her decisions as a feedback provider. Then, I present quantitative findings to offer more information about T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement. From both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, T's cognitive, behavioural, and involvement and its results (i.e., T's decision formation) can be better understood.

Here is the example, which shows how T's feedback delivery approaches were decided when she was writing the following comments. The comments T wrote down read as follows:

> *This opening could go straight to the point, but not very attractive. Try this: "Campus activities play an indispensable and active part in the college life.*

*Among these various activities, social practice benefits me the most." (Is it much more concise?)* ☺
*(Notes: The words enclosed by the round brackets were originally written in Chinese. The translation is mine. From Teacher T's comments on Student A's W1)*

The above-given comments were taken from T's feedback on Student A's first cause-effect writing assignment (See Appendix M for the whole piece of writing). They were written on the issue of **topic statements**. The comment indirectly pointed out Student A's writing problems, and provided a suggested revision, a question comment, and a smiley face.

To write out the comments given above, T made the following cognitive, behavioural, and affective investment. To decide to make the hedged problem-oriented comment provided above (*"This opening could go straight to the point, but not very attractive."*), T first articulated her negative feelings about Student A's opening paragraph (**affective involvement**): *"Oh…, I don't feel this opening paragraph is good."* Then, she read the opening paragraph again, re-evaluating it from the perspective of language and saying that the language and idea of A's writing was both problematic (**cognitive involvement, interpretative and evaluative operations**). T thought aloud: *"besides, 'Get rid of' used here is not appropriate; and the idea 'our life is colourful' is not appropriate either."* Then, based on her re-reading, interpretation, and evaluation of the opening paragraph, T decided to point out the problems in her comments and articulated her decisions: *"Let me point them out."* However, just before typing in her problem-oriented comment, T stopped to decide whether to use English or Chinese to compose her comment (**cognitive involvement, identification and selection operations**). The final decision she made was that she preferred using English: *"I'll do it in English since it is clear enough for her to follow me."*

After reading the introduction, evaluating it, deciding to point out problems, and selecting the response language, T moved on to the acting stage of putting down her decisions on paper (**behavioural involvement**). At first thought, she decided to write down problem-oriented comment as follows: *"This opening is not very attractive."* However, she changed her decision immediately (**cognitive involvement, identification and selection operations**). Considering Student A might feel

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uncomfortable when receiving negative feedback (**cognitive involvement, evaluative operations**) like that, she rephrased her problem-oriented comment by beginning her feedback with something positive (**cognitive involvement, identification and selection operations**) and wrote down: *"This opening could get straight to the point, but not very attractive."* Then, T carried out **review operations (cognitive involvement)**, thinking that *"It is much better to confirm her achievement first."* After that, T re-reviewed her comment by re-reading the opening paragraph and re-evaluate student writing **(cognitive involvement)**: *"Yeah, it [the opening paragraph] is ok, but it is not good enough."*

T's review of her feedback comment inspired her to provide revision. After reviewing her comment *"This opening could get straight to the point, but not very attractive*.", T reported her decision to provide a suggested revision and wrote down (**behavioural involvement**): *"Try this:"*. Then, she stopped to re-consider how to provide a suggested revision (**cognitive involvement, identification and selection operations**). Feeling difficulty in giving a better suggested revision, T said: *"Oh…, my Goodness, how to revise it?"* (**affective involvement**). She compared several sentence stems and language expressions she could use. Finally, she gave up her idea to use the phrases she wanted to use at the beginning (for example, "as far as I'm concerned") and decided to use the simplest way to construct her revision (**cognitive involvement, identification and selection operations**). While writing down her revision, T also articulated her belief that she would like to keep most of what Student A wrote originally (**behavioural and cognitive involvement**). After T finished her revision (*"Campus activities play an indispensable and active part in the college life. Among these various activities, social practice benefits me the most."*), she reviewed it by reading her revision (**cognitive involvement, review operations**).

Once again, inspired by her review operations, T decided to add a question comment ("*Is it much more concise?*") and a smiley emoticon (☺). Regarding her addition, T thought aloud as follows: *"It is necessary to let her know why I have made the revision, and I also need to add a smiley emoticon (☺) to let her know that she did a job that is not bad"* (**behavioural, cognitive and affective involvement**). According to what T said here, she used her question comment to provide an explanation instead of using it to ask a question.

In the end, T reviewed the whole set of feedback comments she had written out and articulated how to construct her comments in future (**cognitive involvement, reflection operations**). With her students' affective response to her feedback in mind, T planned to use the positive and negative pair as a feedback strategy in the future. About this, she said:

> *I would feel very uncomfortable if I received a lot of negative comments. Who wants to be judged and criticised? And no one wants to have their work revised too much. It would be much better to confirm their achievements first before pointing out their problems. I'll continue to use this way to comment.*
> *(From Teacher T's think-aloud for Student A's W1)*

In general, when T was writing feedback on the topic statement, she mainly went through a cognitive process during which she spent much of her effort on cognitively interpreting and evaluating Student A's writing, considering situations, and deciding how to write out her comments. Meanwhile, T's feedback provision also involved her act of typing in comments (behavioural operations). In fact, in the act of typing in feedback, T was also found to make choices and decisions regarding which sentence stem or language expression to use in her comments and revisions (behavioural operations and cognitive involvement). In addition, the example given above shows that T felt that it was hard to offer revisions. Although she did not often express her feelings about experiencing difficulties when revising student writing, it is undeniable that the feedback-providing process she engaged in had an affective dimension. To sum up, T usually went through cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes when completing EA feedback-writing activities, during which her decisions about how to deliver feedback were formed. As to T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement, more details are reported in the following from the quantitative perspective.

Table 4.11 below demonstrates the number and percentages of the cognitive, behavioural, and affective investment T made during feedback provision.

**Table 4.11 Teacher T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement**

| Teacher T's involvement | A | B | C | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EA feedback provision** (Feedback Provision 100%) | **95.3%** | **88.5%** | **87.7%** | **90.6%** |
| **cognitive involvement** (EA Feedback Provision 100%) | 70.0% | 69.6% | 72.2% | 70.4% |
| **behavioural involvement** (EA Feedback Provision 100%) | 24.4% | 22.1% | 21.8% | 22.9% |
| **affective involvement** (EA Feedback Provision 100%) | 5.6% | 8.3% | 6.0% | 6.8% |
| **error feedback provision** (Feedback Provision 100%) | **4.7%** | **11.5%** | **12.3%** | **9.4%** |
| **Total (100%)** | **451** | **561** | **324** | **1336** |

Table 4.11 shows that T's think-aloud and retrospective interview data could be divided into 1366 segments, among which more than 90% were related to EA feedback provision and about 10% were related to error feedback provision. According to the table, T demonstrated a very high level of cognitive involvement (about 70% of the process to respond to EA issues), a low level of affective involvement (about 7% of the process to respond to EA issues), and a relatively high level of behavioural involvement (about 22% the process to respond to EA issues). In addition, a cross-student examination indicated that T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback provision was consistent across students, each of which was about 70%, 22% and 7%.

Regarding T's high-level cognitive involvement, Table 4.12 shows the type, number, and percentages for the cognitive operations utilized by T during feedback provision.

**Table 4.12 The cognitive decision-making process Teacher T involved in**

| Teacher T's cognitive involvement | A | B | C | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **cognitive involvement** | **301** | **346** | **205** | **852** |
| planning and monitoring operations | 0.7% | 2.3% | 1.0% | 1.4% |
| interpretation operations | 21.6% | 16.8% | 20.0% | 19.2% |
| evaluation operations | 19.6% | 22.0% | 21.5% | 21.0% |
| identification and selection operations | 11.0% | 15.3% | 8.3% | 12.1% |
| review operations | 20.9% | 18.8% | 22.4% | 20.4% |
| reflection operations | 1.3% | 3.2% | 3.4% | 2.6% |
| decisions and reasons | 24.9% | 21.7% | 23.4% | 23.2% |

(*Note: T's monitoring operations, or her metacognitive operations, mainly refer to her regulation of emotions*)

Table 4.12 indicates that, to decide how to provide EA feedback, T spent a lot of effort reading and interpreting student texts (about 20% of total involvement),

making evaluations (about 20% of total involvement), and carrying out reviewing operations (about 20% of total involvement). More importantly, the table shows that T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement did not vary greatly across students.

To decide how to deliver EA feedback, T usually invested considerable time and effort for reading and interpreting student texts (**interpretation operations**, 20% of total involvement). Often, Teacher T made up her mind to provide problems/strengths-oriented feedback after reading and interpreting student texts. When carrying out interpretation operations, sometimes T was found to be engaged in a deep-level interpreting process. For example, to accompany her problem-oriented comment with positive remarks, T was found to make attempts to identify the student's writing intention, uncover what the students failed to translate into texts, and interpret student texts at a deep level.

Regarding the evaluation operations T frequently carried out (20% of total involvement), my study found that she evaluated not only student writing, but also

- students' abilities,
- students' writing attitude,
- students' efforts devoted to the writing task,
- students' development as L2 writers,
- students' acceptance of and affective reactions to EA feedback,
- students' writing process,
- students' application of classroom instruction to writing, and
- the differences and changes in students' writing (differences with previous writing attempts and cross-student differences).

As T's evaluation of student writing was usually negative, her evaluation of students often justified her decisions to add something positive to her combination comments.

Also, T carried out the following identification and selection operations during feedback provision (12% of total involvement):

- identifying the exact idea she intended to convey in her feedback,
- selecting a better way to convey her ideas and messages, and
- selecting the most appropriate lexical items, language expressions, sentence structures, feedback language channels (Chinese or English), feedback sequence (e.g., positive feedback placed before negative feedback), and symbols (e.g., highlight or underline; use of liking/disliking face or not) to provide high-quality EA feedback.

As shown above, Teacher T also carried out a number of identification and selection operations to decide on what ideas to convey, how to exactly convey ideas, and which lexical items/language expressions/sentence structures/feedback language channels (Chinese or English)/feedback location/symbols (e.g., highlight or underline; use of sad face or not) to use. When thinking aloud, T was often active in making selections. For example, T spoke aloud: "*improve their…, promote their…, enhance their…*" In this example, T was wording her feedback and attempted to select the most appropriate verb to be used in her feedback. She chose to use "*enhance*" after translating them into Chinese and making comparison.

T also often devoted considerable energy to reviewing the decisions she had made about how to deliver EA feedback (about 23% of total involvement). As to T's review operations, they were found to include her

- rereading and reviewing student writing,
- reading and evaluating her own feedback,
- re-evaluating student ability,
- comparing student writing and her own revision,
- articulating (dis)satisfaction with her own work,
- comparing her revision with student writing, and
- considering student understanding/incorporation/application of EA feedback.

It seems that it was through T's re-interaction with the student text, the student writer, and her own comments that her decisions about how to deliver EA feedback were made.

Sometimes, Teacher T also carried out the following reflection operations during and after typing in comments.

- student problems with dealing EA issues and the causes,
- student progress in argumentation and the causes of student progress,
- her own feedback purposes (for instruction),
- the effective feedback delivery approaches (e.g., confirmation of student strengths and progress),
- student affect, student acceptance of teacher feedback, and student application of classroom instruction concerning EA issues.

The above-mentioned reflection strategies show that T gave serious reflections to the decisions she made during feedback provision, her feedback practices, and her teaching.

In the example used for illustrating T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement, one observable action she took was typing in comments. In fact, during feedback provision, there was another observable action (behaviour) T undertook from time to time. That is, she sometimes consulted online dictionaries/resources to ensure the words and expressions she used in her feedback comments were accurate and appropriate or to find a model text to read. When thinking aloud, she gave two reasons for these behaviours: 1) an inadequate stock of vocabulary, and 2) her expectations to write better comments so that she could explicitly convey and model ideas about good writing.

As shown in Table 4.11, the percentage values of T's affective involvement (about 7%; including her affective responses to student writing, her emotional states aroused by responding to student texts, and her attitude towards her own comments) were relatively low. However, this low percentage does not mean that T's decision-making during feedback is cognitive in nature. My study found that T's cognition, affect, and act were inseparable, and it is the cognition-affect-behaviour integration that led to the formation of her decisions about how to deliver EA feedback. This finding is to be reported in the following section (4.6.2).

### 4.6.2 Teacher T's decision-making: The interaction among her cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement

In this section, several examples are provided to illustrate how T's affect, cognition, and behaviours were intertwined and how her decisions about feedback delivery approaches were produced as a result of that interrelatedness.

The first example illustrates the affect-(meta)cognition interaction and T's decisions to offer explanatory comments. As T's evaluation of Student A's argumentation in her first writing assignment was completely negative, she felt rather bad (cognitive and affective involvement). She thought aloud: *"Hang on; be patient. Let me handle the problem paragraph by paragraph and give her explanations."* That is to say, in this example, along with T's cognitive interpretation of the student writing was her negative emotion (impatience). However, T used a metacognitive strategy (*"hang on"*) to remind herself to shift her attention from her negative emotion (impatience) to the cognitive task itself (deciding how to provide feedback); and then her decision

to provide explanation feedback (*to "handle the problem paragraph by paragraph" and to "give her explanation"*) was made. Obviously, this example shows that teacher affect was deeply interwoven with teacher cognition/metacognition, which interactively led to the formation of teachers' feedback-delivery-approach decisions.

The following is a simple example, which clearly shows the affect-behaviour-cognition interaction and T's decision-making. When in the act of entering her "revision" of student writing, T was found to stop typing again and again to re-consider and re-decide how to offer a better version of revision (interaction between cognition and behaviour). Finally, because she felt it was too cognitively demanding and affectively stressful to provide a "revision" without appropriating student texts (affect-cognition-behaviour interaction), T decided with reluctance and regret to delete and remove her half-finished revision (a decision made). In this example, it is easy to see that T's act (typing in comments), thinking (reconsidering and remaking her decisions about how to revise student texts), and feeling (e.g., feeling it was too difficult to revise student texts and feeling regretful for giving up) were inseparable, which together led to her decision to give up revising student texts.

In fact, the example I used in Section 4.6.1 to illustrate T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement also clearly shows behind T's decisions was the workings of the cognition-behaviour-affect interaction. In that example, when T was revising student writing and writing down the following words: *"Try this:"*, she had difficulty in giving a really good revision (behaviour-affect interaction). However, even though she felt bad, in her mind T kept making comparisons and choices among several sentence stems and language expressions she thought she could use (affect-cognition interaction). At last, she gave up her idea of using the phrases she wanted to use at the beginning (for example, "*as far as I'm concerned*") and decided to use the simplest words and expressions when resuming typing in her revision (cognition-behaviour interaction and Teacher T's decision-making).

### 4.6.3 Teacher T's decision-making: Influence of teacher and contextual factors

As pointed out at the outset of this section (4.6), T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback were also influenced by teacher factors and contextual factors. Below, sub-sections 4.6.3.1 and 4.6.3.2 report these findings.

**4.6.3.1 Teacher factors**

In my study, underlying T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback were the following teacher factors: teacher beliefs, teacher role, teacher image, and teacher personality. The focus of this sub-section is on the influence of these teacher factors.

*Teacher beliefs*

In the background interview, my study found that T believed that she would provide positive, negative, advisory, and explanatory EA comments, and she believed in the usefulness of praise, combination comments, and comments provided in Chinese. Consistent with her beliefs, she did provide these types of EA feedback in her actual practices. In general, the consistency between T's beliefs and the outcomes of her decisions shows that, to some extent, her beliefs about how to provide EA feedback underpinned her feedback decision-making.

However, it is necessary to point out that T's final decisions/responding practices did not completely conform to her beliefs. In the background interview, T repeated that she tended to write direct and concise feedback comments*;* but in practice, instead of writing direct feedback, she used more hedges when commenting on the negative aspects of student writing and providing revisions (See Table 4.5). In some retrospective interviews, T ascribed this to her consideration of the acceptability of teacher feedback and establishing a good relationship with her students. She said in the retrospective interview for Student B's first writing assignment: "*I hedged because of considering its acceptability, and … probably, teacher-student relationship.*"

*Teacher role*

In my study, there was also a link between the role T thought she adopted (as an instructor) and her decision-making about how to deliver EA feedback. In one retrospective interview, T commented on her reason for delivering combination feedback: "*I systematically gave these comments* [*description (of student problems), explanation (of student problems), and suggestion (for problem solution) comments*]; *I feel I'm teaching in the classroom when commenting like this.*" My study also highlighted that T provided *suggestions* (instead of *revisions*) and *question* comments

on student writing because she intended to assume the role of a facilitator to promote student autonomy.

*Teacher image*

In my study, T often provided EA feedback in a hedged way. In the retrospective interview for B's second writing assignment, she explained that one reason for this choice was that she felt afraid of "losing face" for responding directly but in fact she misunderstood students' writing intentions and provided feedback that might be inappropriate. In her view, hedges created a higher probability of face saving in front of her students. T said in the retrospective interview:

> *I'm afraid that I provided wrong comments, or I misunderstood these two sentences, so I used 'seem' here. If I didn't understand her writing correctly, at least my feedback was not completely wrong. This is an issue of 'face-saving'.*

*Teacher personality*

In my study, T chose not to frequently provide questioning comments. In a retrospective interview, she related her decision not to question the student to her personality and personal preference. About this, she said:

> *"I rarely use questions when writing feedback; I choose to directly express my ideas. … I'm straightforward in nature. I prefer telling you what your problems are instead of putting forward questions. I just want to show you problems directly. (Teacher T, retrospective interview for Student B's W2)*

To write revision comments, T's choice was also influenced by her personality and personal preference to express herself concisely and directly. Here is an example. When deciding how to revise the opening paragraph of Student A's first cause-effect writing assignment, T made a choice between two expressions: *"as far as I am concerned"* and *"for me."* Finally, she decided to use *"for me"* in her revision sentence since she thought she preferred a concise, direct way to express herself. She said when thinking aloud: *"I choose to be concise and direct; it is better to construct my revision sentence in this way."* In fact, according to T, commenting on student writing in a concise direct way also saved her time and trouble.

### 4.6.3.2 Contextual factors

My study found five layers of contextual factors impacted T's decision-making about how to deliver EA feedback: the sociocultural context, pedagogical context, textual-

level contexts, personal context, and interpersonal context. An explanation of the influence of these contextual factors makes up this sub-section.

**Sociocultural context**

In my study, T often inserted emoticons (e.g., ☺) into her feedback on student writing. As to this choice, she said that it was influenced by her frequent use of emoticons when using *WeChat (*a mobile app widely popular in China) to text messages and communicate with people. She thought emoticons, especially the smiley face, could directly, easily, and efficiently express her supportive attitude and build students' motivation and confidence in writing. This piece of evidence from my study reflects the socio-cultural influence of the electronic age on T's decision-making about how to provide EA feedback.

**Pedagogical context**

In the retrospective interview for Student A's first writing assignment, T said that she and her students had already achieved an agreement to provide/receive Chinese feedback before she participated in my study. According to T, her students agreed in class that Chinese feedback was clearer and easier to understand. That is to say, in my study, there was a connection between a teacher-student shared decision made in class and T's decision about commenting in Chinese.

T's decision to provide Chinese comments could also be linked to what had already been instructed in class in English. T explained her decision to provide a Chinese comment on Student B's second writing assignment as follows:

> *The issue about the relevance of supporting evidence is our focus in class. Here, my English comment and Chinese comment expressed the same idea. I chose to use the Chinese comment to repeat what I've already said in English; this is because I want to stress the importance of the relevance of supporting evidence.*

**Textual-level context: Feedback acceptability and reliability**

T took feedback acceptability into consideration, when deciding to provide evaluator-response comments. For example, when typing comments on Student C's third writing assignment (*"Your writing is quite coherent …! I do enjoy reading it.☺"*), T said that she must point out some strengths and then wrote down some positive

comments. She felt she had already given too many negative comments and had to say something positive to make it more acceptable.

T's think-alouds indicated that she considered providing reliable revisions important, and she always tried to provide reliable comments and revisions. For example, to help Student C better revise the conclusion of her second writing assignment, T searched the Internet and consulted a piece of model writing she got online. However, because she considered the conclusion of the "model writing" she got online to be too simple and indeed not well-written, T eventually decided not to provide a revision. In fact, apart from her consideration of reliability, T also mentioned the influence of feedback acceptability on her choice not to revise Student C's conclusion: *"Certainly, I also felt they [the students] already have too many writing problems to deal with [after reading feedback]."* T's remark implies that she believed that providing an overwhelming amount of feedback might make it unacceptable.

**Personal contexts: Cognitive overload**

Although T frequently provided revision comments, my study found that sometimes she decided not to give it up. For example, in the retrospective interview for Student B's second writing assignment, T said she commented on B's Conclusion very simply and did not provide revision (*T's comment on the student text was: "It restated the key point, but it's a paragraph that is not attractive."*). As to its reason, T said that she had spent too much effort and time on commenting on other issues and she had no energy to consider how to revise the student's concluding paragraph. T said she had the same problem when commenting on Student A's first writing assignment. Just as she said in the retrospective interview: *"I felt very tired when writing feedback on A's conclusion as well, and I felt I had no spare energy to make a revision at that time."*

**Interpersonal context**

In the background interview, T reported that there was a high level of trust between Student B and herself, and felt their relationship was closest. As shown in Table 4.5, T provided more positive EA feedback on B's writing. Her explanation for one of her positive, encouraging EA comments on B's text was: *"Because it was her [B's]*

*writing; I won't do it on others'."* That is to say, the interpersonal context might have had an influence on how T delivered her EA feedback.

## 4.7 Findings for RQ1: Chapter summary

This chapter reported the following findings related to the following issues: what the teacher brought to the classroom, the general reading and responding process the teacher went through, the EA issues teacher feedback focused on, the approaches the teacher used to deliver EA feedback, and teacher decision-making that underlay the teacher's feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches.

My study found that Teacher T's EA feedback focused on *supporting evidence*, *cohesion and coherence*, *topic statements*, *(sub)topic sentences*, *overall organization*, and *conclusions*. When providing EA feedback, from the perspective of orientation, Teacher T provided problem/strength-oriented feedback, advice/suggestion, explanation, and revision in English or in Chinese or bilingually; and from the perspective of scaffolding degree, Teacher T provided single-statement comments or combination comments. As to the cross-assignment and cross-student changes, my study found that Teacher T constantly focused on EA issues and there was an increase in Teacher T's strength-oriented feedback and hedged feedback from the first writing task to the last writing task.

With regards to the decision-making behind Teacher T's feedback foci, my study found that it was not complicated. Teacher T's decisions were usually informed by her beliefs and were influenced by the interaction between sociocultural and pedagogical contexts.

Concerning how Teacher T decided to deliver EA feedback, my study found that her decisions were made as a result of the interaction among her cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback provision. In addition, some teacher factors and contextual factors were found to be involved in Teacher T's decision-making about how to deliver EA feedback. Now, with the teachers' provision of EA feedback in mind, I turn to RQ2 and focus my attention on the students' interpretation of EA feedback in the following chapter.

# Chapter 5 Findings for RQ2

## 5.0 Introduction

As explained in the Methodology Chapter, to answer RQ2 (*When processing the teacher's EA feedback, how does the Chinese EFL student decide the extent to which it is accepted and incorporated?*), I collected and analysed student data obtained from background interviews, think-alouds, retrospective interviews, and student notes. For RQ2, findings regarding the following issues emerged:

- the micro-level classroom context: what the students brought to the classroom (5.1);
- Student A's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.2);
- Student B's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.3);
- Student C's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.4); and
- how the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback were decided (5.5).

This chapter reported the findings from student data. Finally, a chapter summary is offered (5.6).

## 5.1 The micro-level classroom context: What the students brought to the classroom

In this section, what Students A, B, and C brought to the classroom is reported in their respective order (5.1.1-5.1.3). It is mainly concerned with each student's personality and motivation for learning English, their feedback beliefs, their plans and goals to deal with teacher feedback, and their views about the teacher-student relationship.

### 5.1.1 Student A
*Student A: Personality traits and self-image as an English learner and writer*
In the background interview, A described herself as highly self-disciplined and self-motivated. She thought that she could study independently and keep a high level of concentration while studying. A also said that she was a learner who kept adapting her learning strategies, study plan, and learning pace so as to find the way that best suited her personality.

As an English learner, A said she had a passion for learning English:

*... I feel English is charming. I love it especially when the speaker seems to be saying one thing on the surface, but all his listeners understand what was implied in his remarks. English is also a tool that is so widely used in the world. We need it to expand our horizon, communicate with the world, and help us have a better future career. ... I'm not good at memorization and I need a lot of practice to learn something new, but I'm willing to spend time on it.*

<div align="right">

*(From the background interview with Student A)*

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In A's opinion, her English writing ability was at an upper intermediate level and she liked writing in both Chinese and English.

### Student A: Feedback beliefs

In the background interview, A said that in the past she had few chances to receive written feedback from her teachers; but she acknowledged the importance of teacher feedback, saying *"I think teacher feedback is the second round of teaching, while in-class teacher instruction is the first round. ... So, I think teacher feedback is a very important step of teacher instruction".* Concerning her acceptance of teacher feedback, she commented: *"In general, I felt teachers' evaluation of student writing was accurate and their feedback was constructive. I would like to take all of the feedback I got from my teacher."* However, the background interview with A also shows that she would exercise her agency when processing teacher feedback. She said: "*We should question teacher feedback if we don't think it is right. I will keep my own opinion if it [teacher feedback] is not persuasive enough."*

Concerning language, content and organization feedback, A said she tended to fully accept her teacher's organization feedback because she believed *"the biggest difference between English and Chinese was organizational structure"* and she was prone to making errors in that regard. As for the acceptance of Teacher T's feedback on content and language, A said: *"I feel, if you can deal with the structure issue very well, you won't have big problems with content and language issues."* What A said here implies that she valued organization feedback and the degree of her acceptance of it might be high.

### Student A: Plans and goals to deal with teacher feedback in the semester she participated in my study

In the semester she participated in my study, A thought she would read all the teacher comments, and pay particular attention to the comments on the issue of logic and the

natural ways of expressing herself in English, two major problems in her writing. At the same time, she said she would pay careful attention to the parts that she herself felt was poorly written and carefully read teacher comments on them.

Based on teachers' suggestions and comments, A said she would rethink her writing problems, and try to work out the writing skills and techniques implied in the teacher feedback. Also, she said that she would spend time on positive feedback, as she could make use of it to understand what was working and continue to use that in new writing. Student A also reported it was easier to follow direct feedback.

### *Student A: Teacher-student relationship*
A thought that she trusted Teacher T's capability as a language teacher and considered Teacher T to have a serious attitude toward teaching. A also thought that Teacher T could provide her with suggestions on what she most needed to improve and her feedback would be explicit enough for her to follow. In addition, A considered her relationship with Teacher T to be good: "*She knows my name and she knows who I am, although she doesn't know the names of most of us.*"

### 5.1.2 Student B
### *Student B: Personality traits and self-image as an English learner and writer*
B considered herself observant and eager to learn. "*However*", she said, "*as far as English learning is concerned, I'm a lazy learner.*" In her opinion, rote learning was an easy way to learn English, so she was good at and fond of rote memorization. Regarding language ability, B had felt that her English was at an intermediate level before entering KEY, but she had since realized that she was a low-intermediate level English learner and writer compared with other freshman at KEY. Furthermore, B commented: "*It appears that they are not as unconfident as me. It would be much better if I were placed in the C-level class [basic-level class; As indicated in the Methodology chapter, B was placed in the intermediate B-level class after the placement test.].*"

For B, English, especially spoken English, was very important. She said that she needed to take part in an interview in English soon so that she could successfully transfer to the best school at KEY. Regarding writing in English, B claimed she had never received formal writing instruction. She said at secondary school they were

only asked to recite some typical sentence patterns, and to produce writing that consisted of three parts: stating there is a phenomenon in initial part (paragraph one), explaining the reasons in the middle part (paragraph two), and providing solutions in the final part (conclusion). Even so, B said,

> *I hope my teacher teaches me writing moves, typical structures and useful sentence patterns; I'd like to do mechanic drilling and just directly use these moves and sentence patterns when writing.*
>
> *(From the background interview with Student B)*

B felt that her writing sounded unnatural to native English speakers and was full of Chinglish. She felt "cause-effect" was the only method she could use when writing in English. However, B did not think she could distinguish between "cause" and "effect". "*I only know this method, but I can't flexibly use it*", she said.

### Student B: Feedback beliefs

B said that at secondary school the feedback she received was usually just a grade. At KEY, she said she mainly got feedback from the website *pigai.org*. She thought she preferred teacher feedback since feedback from *pigai.org* focused only on language and sentences: "*We need feedback on both macro- and micro- features of a text*".

B believed that it was necessary to read every error her teacher pointed out, and it was not difficult for her to understand teacher feedback. However, she also believed that she would consider whether teacher feedback was reasonable before deciding whether to accept it or not. According to B, she might accept most of teacher feedback (60-80%).

Specifically, B believed that students usually consider whether the teacher's **content feedback** was reasonable before deciding whether or not to accept it. About this, she said: *"if what my teacher said in her feedback doesn't sound reasonable, I won't accept it."* Talking about the possibility of accepting teachers' content and organization feedback, B said she was more likely to take her teacher's organization feedback.

B said that giving feedback was to instruct, and she believed direct/directive feedback was more effective to achieve this purpose:

*I can't follow teachers if their feedback is somewhat indirect. They should directly tell their students what they need to do. Then I'll quickly remember what the teachers tell me and try to use it next time. It is also good if teachers directly provide us with revision.*
*(From the background interview with Student B)*

Apart from revision, B thought feedback that pointed out her writing problems and advisory comments were crucial, and she tended to accept these two types of comments. In addition, B said she did not consider positive feedback useful and would not pay much attention to it. According to her, *"Teachers use praise comments just to be polite."*

### Student B: Plans and goals to deal with teacher feedback in the semester she participated in my study

In terms of plans and goals in the semester she participated in my study, B said:

*There will be nothing I will particularly focus on and I'll read all teacher comments. Then, I'll bear them in mind, and try to figure out the writing methods my teacher intends to teach me through her feedback. My purpose of processing teacher feedback is to find out the way to produce better writing in similar future tasks, instead of just improving the current one.*
*(From the background interview with Student B)*

### Student B: Teacher-student relationship

B thought that teachers were the people who imparted knowledge and who directed the students to do what they should do. In B's mind, her relationship with Teacher T was a normal teacher-student relationship, but they could talk with each other like friends when out of class.

## 5.1.3 Student C

### Student C: Personality traits and self-image as an English learner and writer

C said that she had a bright, outgoing personality. She believed that she was a good learner of English because she had a great interest in and strong motivation for learning English. She said:

*As a language learner, I'm a really good one. I started learning English at five. My interest in English began when I watched 'Growing Pains' and 'Family Album USA' as a child. Those American TV series were fascinating. I think my childhood experience laid a good foundation for me to stay motivated to learn English.*
*(From the background interview with Student C)*

However, C considered her written proficiency was only fair. She said, when writing, she usually made a mental draft in Chinese first, and then translated it into English. In C's view, she still did not have a good grasp of English writing, since she felt she did not know how to fully translate her ideas from Chinese into English.

### Student C: Feedback beliefs

C considered teacher feedback important: "*If there were no teacher feedback, I wouldn't know why we were asked to write.*" However, regarding her acceptance of teacher feedback, C believed she was a semi-resistor who was easily put on the defensive. About this, she said:

> *I believe most students are semi-resistors. When interpreting teacher feedback, we partly accept teacher comments and partly insisted that our writing is good. In our mind, we justify what we write and feel defensive about why the teacher only looked at our problems but ignored the strengths of our writing.* (From the background interview with Student C)

Furthermore, C explained under what circumstances she did not accept teacher feedback:

> *I wouldn't accept my teacher's feedback if I followed the instructions of my high school English teacher or what I had learnt from some books to compose my text but my teacher [at the university] considered my writing problematic; I'll insist on using what I've learnt in the past.*
> *(From the background interview with Student C)*

Regarding teachers' language, content and organization feedback, C said that there was no difference in her tendency to incorporate these three types of feedback and she might accept all of them. Moreover, she said it was easier for her to accept feedback that used the connective "but", because it indicated the strengths of her writing before pointing out her problems. Revision was another type of feedback C believed she might easily accept and imitate. In the background interview, she also mentioned her willingness to accept comments that both indicated the major problem of her writing and gave her advice and suggestions as to how to improve her writing ability.

### Student C: Plans and goals to deal with teacher feedback in the semester she participated in my study

According to C, if she got specific comments rather than just a grade or general comments, she would read the specific comments from the first to the last to ensure that she did not miss anything. C also thought she would read teacher feedback two

times, since it was possible that she could not fully understand it if she just read it once. C felt that it was good to understand what the teacher wanted to tell you via feedback, carefully think about it, and remember it. However, C did not think she would write in English after graduating from KEY and beginning to work. She only considered English writing to be important because she needed to take the CET-4 and CET-6 tests.

*Student C: Teacher-student relationship*
In C's eyes, Teacher T's English class was interesting and informative. She also felt that Teacher T was a teacher with whom she could have a talk, although she felt that they seldom had the opportunity.

## 5.2 Student A's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

This section begins with a brief description of how A approached teacher feedback (5.2.1). Then, A's acceptance and uptake of EA feedback is reported from two perspectives: the cognitive and behavioural perspective (5.2.2), and the affective perspective (5.2.3).

### 5.2.1 How Student A approached teacher feedback: A general description

A's think-alouds showed that she processed teacher feedback in the following way. When writing was returned with teacher comments, A usually immediately began to process the teacher feedback. She usually went through three rounds of the feedback-interpreting process. In the first round, she processed all the feedback Teacher T provided on her writing and went through the teacher feedback from start to finish in sequence. In the retrospective interviews, A said: *"I read every piece of Teacher T's feedback, from the one written at the beginning to the one at the end; I don't want to miss anything."*

Then, A went into the second round of feedback interpretation. A pointed out that in the second round she interpreted teacher feedback at a deeper level:

> *After I went through Teacher T's feedback and had ideas about where my problems lay, I began to think deeply about Teacher T's feedback and tried to summarize what I could learn from it. Again, I went through all feedback on my writing.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her second writing assignment)*

A was also found to write down notes while she was re-interpreting teacher feedback. She said she mainly wrote down her thoughts and reflections. The notes A wrote down were usually a paragraph long.

A's third round of feedback-interpretation was short. During this process, she usually used keywords to summarize the teacher feedback. For example, she believed Teacher T's comments on her first, second, and third writing assignments focused on organization, clarity, and conciseness respectively.

### 5.2.2 Student A's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Based on analyses of A's think-alouds and retrospection, Table 5.1 presents an overview of A's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback from the cognitive and behavioural perspective. The "√" in Table 5.1 represents the way A accepted and incorporated EA feedback, which might be "accepted and incorporated", "semi-accepted", "noticed", or "not-accepted". In this section, the information summarized in Table 5.1 is explained.

**Table 5.1 Student A's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback**

| EA feedback | accepted and incorporated | semi-accepted | noticed | not-accepted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| supporting evidence | √ (W1 & W2) | | √ (W3) | |
| cohesion & coherence (conjunction) | √ (W1 & W2) | | √ (W2 & W3) | √ (W2) |
| topic statement | √ (W1) | | √ (W2 &W3) | |
| (sub)topic sentence | √ (W1 & W2) | | √ (W3) | |
| conclusion | √ (W2) | √ (W1, W3) | | |
| overall organization | √ (W1 & W2) | | √ (W3) | |

*(Note: W1=the first cause-effect writing task; W2=the second exemplification writing task; W3=the third free-technique writing task)*

**Student A: Widespread acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback**

Table 5.1 indicates that Student A widely accepted Teacher T's EA feedback on her W1 and W2. As mentioned in Section 5.2.1, A usually went through three rounds of feedback interpretation. After these rounds, A generally accepted and incorporated Teacher T's EA feedback on her W1 and W2. In fact, when dealing with teacher feedback on her W1 and W2, A often expressed her acceptance or appreciation of it (e.g., "*really good*", "*inspiring*"). In addition, as can be seen from the notes A took

down, she deeply understood, agreed with, and assimilated Teacher T's feedback on her W1 and W2 (See examples later in this section).

Regarding A's non-acceptance of feedback on cohesion and coherence, she just occasionally rejected Teacher T's feedback on her use of connectives. For instance, when responding to T's feedback "*adding "For example*", A thought aloud: "*it is ok without it.*" Furthermore, in the retrospective interviews, she explained:

> *When writing, I focused my attention on coherence of meaning. Using conjunctives to create coherence in form is not that important. ... I don't think I need to pay much attention to teacher feedback on connectives.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2)*

A semi-accepted teacher feedback on the conclusion of her W1 and W3. Teacher T's feedback on the last paragraph of A's W1 reads as follows:

> *This paragraph is not clear. ... You're still arguing with cause and effect. This is actually one of the body paragraphs. So, you did not conclude your writing appropriately. ... A real conclusion is still needed.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on A's W1, originally in Chinese)*

When responding to these comments, A only accepted Teacher T's advice ("*A real conclusion is still needed.*") but refused to accept her criticism ("*...you did not conclude your writing appropriately.*"). She said:

> *This is one of my body paragraphs. I just didn't write a concluding paragraph. Teacher T misunderstood me. I agree with her that a conclusion is needed, but I disagree that I concluded my writing inappropriately.*
> *(From Student A's think-alouds for her W1)*

When dealing with Teacher T's conclusion feedback on her W3, A agreed with T's criticism that coherence was lacking in her conclusion, but she did not accept T's revision. In her words, "*I didn't mean that I refused to accept this feedback. I feel her revision is a concise version, but it was not coherent either.*"

**Student A: Decreasing incorporation of EA feedback**

Table 5.1 also shows that, when interpreting Teacher T's EA feedback on her W3, A mainly just acknowledged she noticed it. Furthermore, after interpreting T's feedback on her W3, A did not write down any words or compose written notes as she had done before. These differences indicated that A's uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback was decreasing. A said in the retrospective interview that she only "*marked up the issues about conciseness and wordiness*" when dealing with T's feedback on her W3.

A also said that the EA-related knowledge Teacher T intended to teach through feedback on her W3 had already existed in T's feedback on her W1 and W2.

**Student A: Self-regulated, deep-level incorporation of EA feedback**

As indicated in Table 5.1, A cognitively and behaviourally incorporated almost all of Teacher T's EA comments. Qualitative analyses of student data showed the depth of A's incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback on her W1 and W2.

When interpreting teacher feedback on her W1, A accepted Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence during the first round. She thought T's feedback on supporting evidence was clear and she could understand and agree with what T said in her comments. However, A could not incorporate it because she had no idea how to act on it and how to develop arguments. So, during the second round of feedback interpretation, A searched the internet to find out whether there was a model text to consult and whether she could learn how to back up arguments and how to write conclusion from it. She found one model text and her critical analysis of the text helped her deeply understand how to deal with issues like supporting evidence, the concluding paragraph, cohesion and coherence, and the overall organization in new writing. For example, when thinking aloud, A said, "*Yes, he [the writer] didn't just list empty ideas like me; there are concrete explanations in his writing.*"

When going over Teacher T's feedback on her W1 and W2, A took down notes related to supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, topic sentences, overall organization, and conclusions. She wrote down what she learnt from T's comments, her writing problems and strengths, her ideas about how to develop arguments, and her reflection about how to plan writing and improve it. In general, the content of A's notes was insightful, and her comments were long. The following is an example of her end notes:

> *Major writing problems: 1. Structure of my writing: To produce a well-structured text, it is necessary to have a logical and clear outline before writing. And it is needed to argue from various perspectives and use concise sentences to ensure the topic is elaborated thoroughly and strongly. 2. What is exceedingly important is the organizational structure of the body paragraphs. The topic sentence should be elaborated by two or three supporting arguments. It could be argued from the perspective of the How and the Why.*
>
> *(From Student A' notes written on her W1; Originally in Chinese)*

Although there was some repetitive information in A's notes (e.g., notes about how to argue for topic sentences), the quote above showed A accepted and assimilated Teacher T's comments on supporting evidence, topic sentences, and organization. It seems that teacher comments also provided A with inspiration on how to plan writing. A's thinking about how to produce well-organized expository texts and how to plan writing reveals that she not only accepted what T said on the surface but also at a deep level.

When going over Teacher T's EA feedback on her W1 and W2, A often mentally considered how to make the revision. For instance, when Teacher T pointed out A failed to provide supporting evidence for one of her subtopic sentences in her W1 ("*Be involved in social practice found a platform for us to communicate and cooperate with others*"), A attempted to revise it: "*Then, what do I need to write to support it? I can write…*" The process A went through to make mental revision also reflects that her acceptance and uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback on her W1 and W2 did not lack depth.

### 5.2.3 Student A's emotional acceptance of EA feedback

From the perspective of the emotional acceptance of teacher feedback, A's attitude towards Teacher T's EA feedback underwent a major change. When dealing with T's EA feedback on her W1, A sometimes said: "*Teacher T's suggestion [on my topic sentence] is really good, and I also like the revision she made.*" Sometimes, she said that T's feedback on supporting evidence was "*clear*" and "*impressive*". Similarly, A highly valued and appreciated T's feedback on her W2. In her own words, Teacher T's feedback on her topic sentence and the relevance of supporting evidence was "*detailed*" and "*enlightening*". However, A felt that T's EA feedback on her W3 was "*simple*" and "*was not as helpful as before*". In her opinion, she had already been able to apply Teacher T's feedback on her W1 and W2 to new writing and T's EA feedback on her W3 provided no new knowledge and insight regarding how to deal with EA issues and how to produce better expository writing. Overall, A's emotional acceptance of T's EA feedback is marked by a shift from her appreciation of it to her dissatisfaction with it.

## 5.3 Student B's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Like Section 5.2, this section is organized around three aspects of the findings: a brief description of how B approached teacher feedback (5.3.1), B's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.3.2), and B's affective acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.3.3).

### 5.3.1 How Student B approached teacher feedback: A general description

When B's writing was returned to her with teacher comments, she usually began to process the teacher feedback immediately. She went through three rounds of the feedback-interpreting process as well. In the first round of interpretation of feedback, aside from cognitively processing Teacher T's comments, B also highlighted some of T's comments with colours or jotted down the questions she had when she interpreted the feedback. B described her second round of feedback interpretation as a process of scanning T's feedback and her own writing and took down notes:

> *I re-read it, from the beginning to the end. I scanned Teacher T's feedback again and re-thought about my writing problems. Re-reading is my habit; I think this does me good. I also wrote down Teacher T's key points, my questions and my problems, but mainly questions and problems.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student B for her W1)*

B's third round of feedback-interpretation was short. When dealing with teacher feedback on her W1, at the final stage, B wrote down the following notes, the longest one she wrote while participating in my study:

> *I think the entire organizational structure of my writing is good; it is necessary to revise the body structure; and the relevance of the support to the subtopic sentence is my problem.*
> *(From B's notes; Originally in Chinese.)*

In these comments, B noted down the strengths of her writing and began to accept Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence by admitting the existence of one weakness in her writing (about the relevance of the support to the subtopic sentence).

### 5.3.2 Student B's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Table 5.2 summarizes Student B's acceptance and uptake of EA feedback from the cognitive and behavioural perspectives. This section explains the findings contained in Table 5.2, as well as findings from qualitative analyses of student data.

**Table 5.2 Student B's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback**

| EA feedback | accepted and incorporated | semi-accepted | noticed and incorporated | not-accepted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| supporting evidence | √ (W2) | √ (W1, W2) | √ (W2, W3) | √ (W1) |
| cohesion & coherence | √ (W2) | | √ (W1, W2, W3) | √ (W1) |
| topic statement | √ (W2) | | √ (W3) | √ (W1) |
| (sub)topic sentence | | | √ (W2, W3) | √ (W1) |
| conclusion | | | √ (W1, W2) | |
| overall organization | √ (W1) | | √ (W2, W3) | |

## Student B: Slow, passive, superficial acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Table 5.2 reveals that, regarding B's acceptance of EA feedback on her W1, she did not accept most of it. For example, when Teacher T pointed out in her feedback on B's W1 that B just repeated the main point she made in the topic sentence but provided no supporting evidence, she voiced her disagreement, stating that it was not a repetition of the topic sentence but a writing technique she used purposefully to reinforce the claim she had made in the topic sentence. However, when dealing with teacher feedback on her W2, B's acceptance and uptake of it showed modest increase. When she was interpreting teacher feedback on her W2, she accepted some teacher feedback on supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, and topic statements. Moreover, Table 5.2 shows that in most cases B just **noticed** (read and translated) Teacher T's EA comments on her W2 and W3; and then based on her reading of them or her reading and translation (from English to Chinese) of them, B incorporated T's EA feedback (by making mental notes, memorization, and marking up key points). In the third retrospective interview, B said that she incorporated all of Teacher T's EA comments: *"I solved all the problems Teacher T pointed out in her comments on the previous two pieces of writing."* Generally, from the cognitive and behavioural perspective, B experienced a change in her acceptance and uptake of EA feedback (from non-acceptance to notice and uptake). This change reflects that it took B time to accept and incorporate EA feedback, and her notice-based incorporation of EA feedback could only help her make superficial advances regarding her EA issues.

There was more evidence from my study that pointed to B's superficial acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback. First, sometimes, her acceptance and uptake of

Teacher T's EA feedback was based on her understanding of it from the perspective of language. For example, T wrote the following coherence comments on B's W2:

> **B's original writing:**
> *In the process of her writing, literature served as a guide to provide inspiration.*
> **B's writing with Teacher T's comments:**
> *In the process of her writing, literature (**A possible revision: 'the literature work read previously'. This change is made for the purpose of emphasizing previous reading experience.**) served as a guide to provide inspiration.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on Student B's W2; Originally in Chinese)*

In the retrospective interview, B said:

> *I memorized this piece of feedback. I feel pointing this out is really good. Previously, I've never paid attention to **language issues** like this. Look, adding some modifiers to emphasize previous reading experience improves my writing a lot. ...*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student B for her W2)*

In this example, to a large extent, T used the revision she suggested in her comments to construct the semantic coherence of B's writing. However, what B said in the retrospective interview clearly indicated that her acceptance and incorporation (memorization) of it was at a superficial level. This is because she interpreted T's coherence feedback from the perspective of language and there was a lack of understanding of the intention of the feedback.

Second, the actions B carried out during the process of interpreting teacher feedback also showed that her acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback was superficial. At the first and second round of the feedback-interpretation process, B took notes from time to time. In general, she chiefly noted down her questions. For example, B often wrote down the following notes: *"What's the problem?"*, *"Details?"*, and *"Is there a problem?"* B also wrote down the knowledge she learnt from T's EA feedback, such as *"Use 'as follows' to connect paragraphs"*, and *"Use modifiers to show your writing sticks to the topic."* These examples provided here indicate that the notes B generally took were not only brief and short, but also lacked depth.

B also either made mental notes to incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback or just memorized it. When thinking aloud, sometimes B spoke aloud: *"Keep this in mind"*; *"Pay attention to this when writing next time"*; *"Use connectives to be concise next time"*; and so forth. In addition, B kept highlighting the key words (e.g., *"logical*

*structure*", "*cohesion and coherence*", "*well-developed argumentation*", and "*clear overall organization*") contained in T's EA comments when she was interpreting teacher feedback. In B's opinion, highlighting the key words in teacher comments was also a type of memorization. Generally, these approaches B often used to incorporate EA feedback showed that her cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was limited.

Regarding B's non-acceptance to acceptance of teacher feedback on EA issues, it seems that there was a turning point. In her retrospective interview for her W2, B said she came to understand and accept Teacher T's feedback on "logic". When commenting on a supporting example in B's W2, T explained why she considered that the example B used was not argumentative as follows:

> *... Besides, the logic in your sentence was not clear: There is no logical relationship between the two facts that Michael Yu got something new from literature and that he changed from a farmer's son to a person well known in the world.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on Student B's W2; Originally in Chinese.)*

In the interview, B said that, in the first round of feedback interpretation, she did not understand what Teacher T meant by commenting *"The logic ... was not clear"*. In her mind, "logic" was a construct too abstract to be understood. However, in the second round of feedback interpretation, by re-reading T's explanatory comment "*There is no logical relationship between the two facts ...*", B suddenly realized that there was a lack of a cause-effect relationship between "the two facts" she mentioned in her writing and that cause-effect relationship was "the logic" Teacher T referred to in her feedback. Based on this realization, B accepted Teacher T's feedback on her supporting example about Michael Yu and considered T's feedback "*enlightening and inspiring*". After that, B seemed to become receptive to teacher feedback.

### 5.3.3 Student B's emotional acceptance of EA feedback

Like A, B's emotional acceptance of EA feedback also underwent a change. When responding to teacher feedback on her W1, she said that she was "surprised", "stuck", "confused", and "defensive". As can be seen in the example quoted in Section 5.3.2 (the example about B's understanding of EA feedback from the perspective of language), B highly valued some of Teacher T's feedback on her W2, saying that "*I feel pointing this out is really good.*" From the emotional perspective, B's acceptance of Teacher T's EA feedback moved from resistance to continuous acceptance of it.

## 5.4 Student C's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Like Sections 5.2 and 5.3, this section is organized according to the following headings: a general description of how C approached teacher feedback (5.4.1), C's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.4.2), and C's affective acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (5.4.3).

### 5.4.1 How Student C approached teacher feedback: A general description

The first step C usually took when interpreting teacher feedback was to go through her own writing first. She said: *"I need to read my writing first to refresh my memory."* Then, C went through three rounds of the feedback-interpreting process. During this process, C did not want to miss any teacher comment either. She said:

> *I'm sure that Teacher T commented on my writing from the beginning to the end; so, I want to follow the same sequence she went through when she commented on my writing. By reading in this way, I'll miss nothing from teacher feedback.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student C for her W1)*

In the second round of feedback interpretation, C said that she summarized her thoughts and ideas that arose from her first round of feedback interpretation and wrote down the greatest problems of her writing. In addition, C said: *"I also marked the notes I took down with numbers."* Then, during the third round of feedback interpretation process, C usually corrected some of her language problems. At the last stage, C sometimes also noted down where a revision was needed and planned to "*fix the major flaw of my [her] writing*" afterwards (In fact, C rewrote her W1 before Teacher T assigned the second writing task to the class.).

### 5.4.2 Student C's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

Table 5.3 displays C's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback from the cognitive and behavioural perspective. This section illustrates the findings summarized in this table and reports qualitative findings.

**Table 5.3 Student C's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback**

| Focus of EA feedback | accepted | semi-accepted | noticed | not-accepted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | semi-incorporated | | |
| supporting evidence | √ (W2) | √ (W1, W3) | | |
| cohesion & coherence | √ (W1, W2, W3) | √ (W1) | √ (W2) | |
| topic statement | √ (W2, W3) | √ (W1) | | |
| (sub)topic sentence | √ (W3) | | | |
| conclusion | √ (W3, W2) | √ (W1) | | |
| overall organization | | √ (W3) | | |

**Student C: Other-regulated, semi-acceptance and -incorporation of EA feedback**

Table 5.3 indicates that C was relatively stable in her general acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback. She chiefly accepted or semi-accepted the feedback. In the final retrospective interview for teacher feedback on her W3 (the free-technique writing), C said that she accepted almost all of Teacher T's EA comments that pointed out her major writing problems, and those comments focused on logic issues. C, like Teacher T, used "logic" as an encompassing term that referred to both macro- and micro-level "logic" issues such as relevance of supportive arguments, logical sequence of argumentation, and a clear logical flow from one idea/sentence to next.

However, C's data indicated that she mainly semi-incorporated Teacher T's EA feedback. This is because sometimes her acceptance and incorporation of it was based on her assumption about what T intended to tell her. Here is an example. T made the following comments on C's W1:

> *C's writing:*
> *In order to …, I referred to many books and websites. These resources not only enrich my knowledge but also broaden my horizons.*
> *C's writing with comments:*
> *In order to …, I referred to many books and websites. These resources (**The learning process**) not only enrich my knowledge but also broaden my horizons.*

When thinking aloud and responding to this revision Teacher T made, C said:

> *Teacher T told me to revise "These resources". Probably what Teacher T wanted to tell me was that it is not these inanimate resources that enriched my knowledge, but the process of learning through resorting to resources that could enrich my knowledge.*
>
> *(From Student C's think-alouds for her W1)*

Furthermore, in the retrospective interview, C made the following explanation about her think-alouds:

> *At the beginning, I was unable to understand why my writing needed to be modified to 'the learning process'. But I tried to understand it from Teacher T's perspective and tried to find out the reasons behind her revision. I felt I got her point, though not quite sure about it.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with C for her W1)*

To a large extent, Teacher T's revision ("*the learning process*") made that sentence and its preceding sentence ("*In order to …, I referred to many books and websites*") better connected in meaning; so, it seems that Teacher T used her revision to help C construct cohesion and coherence. However, the above-provided quote shows that although C made great effort to understand teacher revision, she did not feel that her understanding of it was adequate and thorough. As such, it is not possible to say that this assumption-based interpretation could lead to C's full acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's feedback on cohesion and coherence.

Moreover, C also just semi-incorporated Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, topic statements, and conclusions because she often did not know how to act on the feedback and she still needed further clarification from the teacher. For example, when thinking aloud, C said: "*Teacher T wanted me to insert [conjunction] 'since', but where to insert it?*" She also said: "*then, how to write it to make it supportive?*". Moreover, when taking notes, C also wrote down her questions about how to act on teacher feedback, such as *"How to revise, and how to open an expository writing?"*

C's semi-incorporation of teacher feedback was also reflected in how she took notes. Like B, C's notes were generally brief and short (e.g., *"1. Pay attention to logic!!!"*). Sometimes, she only used punctuation or marks or underlines to indicate the part of comments she considered important/difficult to act on and to remind herself what could be incorporated into her new writing.

### 5.4.3 Student C's emotional acceptance of EA feedback

In the retrospective interviews for her W2 and W3 (the exemplification and free-technique writing assignments), C stressed that she took a more accepting attitude when interpreting teacher feedback. She gave the following explanation:

*Unlike interpreting Teacher T's feedback on my first writing assignment, I did not feel defensive this time. To tell the truth, I didn't tell myself that I should not be defensive before reading Teacher T's feedback. This time, the more comments I read, the happier I felt; my teacher often used "or" in her comments and gave me choices.*

*(From Student C's think-aloud for her W2)*

The above quote indicates that C experienced a change in her emotional acceptance of teacher feedback. That is, emotionally, her reaction to Teacher T's EA feedback changed from defensiveness to receptiveness.

## 5.5 How the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback were decided

My study found how the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback were decided:

1) was associated with the interaction among their cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with it;
2) was related to the depth of the students' cognitive processing of the EA feedback; and
3) was mediated by a number of student and contextual factors or the interaction between student and contextual factors.

These findings are reported in the following sections. However, before providing answers, first I explain A, B, and C's cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement with Teacher T's EA feedback (5.5.1) separately. This explanation contextualizes the answers reported in the sections following it (5.5.2-5.5.4).

### 5.5.1 The students' cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement with EA feedback

A quantification of the think-aloud and retrospective interview data obtained from Students A, B, and C revealed that the process they went through to interpret teacher feedback was a cognitive, behavioural, and affective process. Table 5.4 summarizes the percentages of their cognitive, behavioural and affective engagement with Teacher T's EA feedback.

**Table 5.4 The students' engagement with EA feedback**

| Students' engagement with EA feedback | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| cognitive engagement | **86.0%** | 74.2% | 77.8% |
| behavioural engagement | 6.0% | **18.5%** | 10.7% |
| affective engagement | 8.0% | 7.3% | **11.5%** |
| **Total** | 100% | 100% | 100% |

The findings in Table 5.4 indicate that, when A, B, and C were processing Teacher T's EA feedback, they spent a great deal of effort on cognitive operations (e.g., reading teacher feedback). In comparison, B devoted more effort to taking actions (18.5%, e.g., typing in notes, highlighting with colours the key points of teacher feedback). Furthermore, the percentage of C's affective engagement with Teacher T's EA feedback was the highest among the three students (11.5%).

In my study, although the students were only asked to cognitively process Teacher T's feedback, A, B and C unexpectedly carried out a number of behavioural operations (6%, 18.5% and 10.7% of total engagement respectively). Their behavioural operations included help-seeking operations (e.g., consulting dictionaries installed in mobile phone), (mental/written) note-taking, minor revision, memorization, and key points highlighting. According to Table 5.4, it seems that A employed far fewer behavioural operations than B. The cause of this difference is that B frequently highlighted, underlined or marked the key points in the teacher feedback so the frequency count of B's behavioural operations is much greater. By comparison, the behavioural operations A deployed usually took a long time, but the frequency of occurrence was much less. A usually wrote longer notes, but seldom highlighted problems or teacher comments with colours or in boldface.

Overall, A, B, and C's affective engagement with the teacher feedback mainly involved the emotional feelings that were aroused by the feedback (e.g., overwhelmed, overjoyed), their affective evaluation of their own writing (e.g., confident), and their affective evaluation of the teacher feedback (e.g., excellent feedback). For example, when commenting on one of Teacher T's comments on cohesion and coherence, B said: "*I feel pointing this out is really good*". Table 5.4 shows that C's feedback interpretation was marked by her affective engagement with it (11.5%). In my study, C often articulated her emotional responses when responding to Teacher T's EA feedback (e.g., "*Teacher T praised me; I'm overjoyed.*"). B also often articulated their emotional feelings that arose from the teacher feedback, but A chiefly articulated her affective evaluation of the teacher feedback and showed her appreciation of the teacher feedback when thinking aloud.

As for the students' cognitive engagement, Table 5.5 summarizes the percentages of the different cognitive operations the three students carried out.

**Table 5.5 Students A, B, and C's cognitive engagement with EA feedback**

| Cognitive operations | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| (re)-reading (a stretch of self-written text & feedback) | 30.6% | **44.7%** | 30.6% |
| processing operations (e.g., processing self-written text) | 15.3% | **0.0%** | 5.6% |
| evaluation operations (e.g., evaluating teacher feedback) | **15.0%** | **30.6%** | **26.5%** |
| analysis operations (e.g., analysing teacher feedback) | **9.6%** | 2.1% | **15.3%** |
| justification operations (e.g., justifying self-written text) | 4.7% | 7.4% | 11.2% |
| review operations (e.g., re-analysing teacher feedback) | **10.0%** | 9.2% | **1.5%** |
| metacognition operations (e.g., control of emotion) | 3.7% | 1.8% | 6.1% |
| incorporation decisions | 11.3% | 4.2% | 3.1% |
| **Total** | 100% | 100% | 100% |

In Table 5.5, it could be found there were several figures that stood out (marked in bold). First, the table shows that, comparing with Students A and C, B spent a large amount of time and effort on reading Teacher T's EA comments and her own writing (44.7%). However, unlike A and C, she never analysed her own writing (0.0%). What is more, although the percentage value of B's evaluative operations was comparatively high (30.6%), most of her evaluation operations were her articulation of her disagreement with or inability to understand Teacher T's EA feedback.

According to Table 5.5, C's feedback engagement was characterised by the evaluation and interpretation operations (26.5% and 15.3%) she carried out. It seems that she spent much more time and effort on these operations than A did (15.0% and 9.6%). However, this was not exactly the case. Like C, a major portion of A's time and effort was devoted to analysing Teacher T's EA feedback. This was found because A not only interpreted Teacher T's EA feedback (9.6%) but also further analysed it when she carried out review operations (10%).

### 5.5.2 Student decision-making: The interaction among their cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement

As indicated at the beginning of this section (5.5), my study found that the three participants' decision-making regarding their acceptance and uptake of EA feedback were related to the interaction among their cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement during feedback interpretation. This finding is illustrated by the following examples.

In the retrospective interview for her W2, Student A recalled what was going through her mind when she was thinking aloud for the following teacher feedback:

> *A's writing:*
> *Literature is just like blooming flowers and its prosperity and diversity if an essential part of development of our civilization. (From A's W2)*
> *A's writing with comments:*
> *Literature is just like blooming flowers and its prosperity and diversity if an essential part of development of our civilization. (**The prosperity and diversity of literature is essential for civilization development. It seems that this sentence is logically problematic. It can be deleted. Using less modifiers to be concise.**)*                (*Originally in Chinese*)

The following remarks were Student A's retrospection about her interpretation of the above comments:

> *Teacher T said that the sentence "The prosperity and diversity of literature is essential for civilization development" seems to be logically problematic. At the first sight of it, it put me on the defensive. I didn't think my writing was problematic and I believed it was logical. But I didn't pass it [teacher feedback] over. I kept focusing on it. I kept thinking. Very shortly, I realized that it was problematic. And then I was not defensive any more. Yes, it was problematic. ...*
>                 (*From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2*)

The above quote clearly indicates the way the cognition-affect interaction and the affect-(meta)cognition interaction contributed to the formation of A's decision to accept teacher feedback (on cohesion and coherence). A first said that Teacher T's negative feedback immediately put her on the defensive, which indicates the influence of the cognition-affect interaction on A's refusal to accept and incorporate teacher feedback. Then, she told herself to rationalize her negative emotional reactions and not skip over it. That is to say, the affect-metacognition interaction leads to her decision not to move on and to keep carrying out cognitive operations. Overall, on the basis of these cognition-affect and affect-(meta)cognition interactions, A's decision to accept teacher feedback ("*Yes, it was problematic.*") was formed. In fact, then, A also provided a revised version of the problematic sentence. Her revision read as follows:

> *The prosperity and diversity of literature contribute to the development of our civilization. We can never neglect the weight of reading literature.*

This revision indicates that Student A accepted and incorporated the teacher feedback. To be concise, she deleted "*Literature is just like blooming flowers*" and broke down the original long sentence into two short ones. From the perspective of

logic, the revised sentences were coherently connected and directly stated her topic about the importance of literature. This revision A made reflects that she cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally accepted and incorporated Teacher T's feedback. Her final decision was made because she was involved in a process during which her (meta)cognition, affect, and behaviour were intertwined and inseparable.

Here is another example about the influence of the cognition-behaviour-affect interaction on the formation of the students' acceptance and incorporation decisions. As reported in the Methodology Chapter, Teacher T's students were asked to write CET-4 writing tasks. As free model texts for these writing tasks are available online, the students had access to them if they wanted to consult them. When A felt she still had questions about how to use evidence to support topic sentences and how to conclude a piece of writing, she took some actions (cognition-behaviour interaction). She looked up online resources to find model texts and critically analysed one model text to locate answers to her questions (behaviour-cognition interaction). While she cognitively processed the model text found online, from time to time she pointed out what made her feel excited and what made her feel disappointed (cognition-affect interaction). Then, A incorporated the way of writing she felt excited about (affect-cognition interaction) and intended to save the online document for future reference (affect-cognition-behaviour interaction). On the whole, the formation of A's decision to accept and incorporate Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence and conclusions were based on her cognition-behaviour-affect.

B and C's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback were also based on their inseparable cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement with it. For example, when B received teacher feedback, she exclaimed: "*Oh, my God, so many problems.*" In the retrospective interview for her W1, B recalled:

> *I was overwhelmed by it [teacher feedback]. I felt I got stuck in Teacher T's feedback. All I thought about at that time was Teacher T's criticism that I just repeated what I said in the topic sentence. I couldn't think straight at all. … My defensiveness prevented me from accepting Teacher T's feedback, although 'defensiveness' may be not the exact word I can use to describe what I felt at that time.*
> 
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student B for her W1)*

In the retrospective interview for her W2, C said:

*To tell the truth, if I got 'sugar-coated pills' [e.g., praise-criticism paired feedback], I would feel very cheerful and could accept teacher feedback more easily. The teacher's criticism immediately created a feeling of resistance in me.*

*(From the retrospective interview with Student C for her W2)*

The above two examples show that the cognition and behaviour that the two participants experienced during feedback interpretation were heavily emotion-involved and their interrelatedness determined their acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback. Due to her negative feelings, B could not even think, let alone accept the feedback and act on it. C's expectation for "sugar-coated pills" (a type of hedged feedback) and her dislike for "criticism" (that is, direct negative comments) controlled her thinking and behaviour as well, and were inseparable in the way they influenced her cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback.

### 5.5.3 Student decision-making: The depth of their cognitive processing of EA feedback

As shown in Table 5.5, Student B spent a lot of effort on reading Teacher T's EA feedback aloud and reading her own writing (44.7%) but spent a rather limited amount of time and effort on analysing teacher feedback (2.1%) during feedback interpretation. Considering B could only superficially and slowly accept and incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback, these numerical results, to some extent, indicate that the students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was related to the depth of their analysis and processing of it.

The following qualitative analysis of A's retrospective interview for her W2 also indicates that there was a connection between the level of her processing of EA feedback and her acceptance and incorporation of it. She said:

*… Then I read the comment "**Pay attention to the coherence of the supporting details which should go closely around the topic.**" This means that you need to let your readers see that your details do revolve around your topic [topic sentence], and you need to use sufficient details to illustrate your topic [topic sentence]. Use details appropriately, and then your readers can deeply and comprehensively understand your topic [topic sentence]. This is all that I thought about and realized [when thinking aloud for T's advice].*

*(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2)*

Here, by constantly stating "you need …", it can be seen that A accepted and incorporated Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence and coherence as advisory

messages. However, her repeated mention of "readers" showed that she did not simply accept Teacher T's advice as advisory messages. As she interpreted the feedback from the perspective of audience, A also accepted and incorporated the implication of Teacher T's intention. That is, the aim of your writing should be "*your readers can deeply and comprehensively understand your topic*". Moreover, she summarized a rule about what to do when composing new writing ("*use sufficient details to illustrate your topic*"). In general, in this instance, A's deep-level processing of Teacher T's EA feedback played an important part in her deep-level acceptance and incorporation of it. It suggests that there was a close relationship between the depth of students' processing of teacher feedback and the extent to which it was accepted and incorporated.

My study found that C often just semi-accepted and semi-incorporated Teacher T's EA feedback. Her acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was also related to her reading and processing of the feedback at a relatively deeper level. For example, C sometimes sensed a negative meaning in Teacher T's positive comments on supporting evidence. On C's W3, Teacher T commented: "*The structure of this paragraph is fine: statement + exemplification.*" From this comment C received the following implied message: "*The structure is fine. It means there is still room for improvement. I don't think this [teacher feedback] is real encouragement. But how to improve it [C's writing]?*" This quote shows that Student C chose not to fully accept Teacher T's positive feedback. Her decision was made largely because she based on the implications of teacher feedback to make decisions and she read and processed the feedback in depth.

In my study, the students read Teacher T's EA feedback in two other ways: repeated reading of the same piece of teacher feedback and multiple rounds of reading of teacher feedback. These two ways of reading teacher feedback, more or less, added depth to the students' processing of the feedback, which then contributed to the students' acceptance and incorporation of it. For example, during thinking-aloud and interview sessions, A mentioned from time to time her re-reading of Teacher T's EA feedback and its effect: "*I read the sentence again and found it [what Teacher T said in her feedback] was right*"; and "*To tell the truth, at this point I read it again and then understood where the problem was*". These quotes clearly indicate that re-

reading and a deeper-level of processing of teacher feedback played a decisive part in A's acceptance and uptake of teacher feedback.

As indicated in Sections 5.2.1, 5.3.1, and 5.4.1, Students A, B, and C all went through three rounds of feedback processing. Multiple rounds of reading and interpreting Teacher T's feedback had a significant effect on B's acceptance of Teacher T's comments on supporting evidence. In Section 5.3.2, the example about Michael Yu showed that B came to understand, accept, and incorporate Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence when she re-read it during the second round of feedback interpretation.

### 5.5.4 Student decision-making: The influence of student and contextual factors

My study also found that some student factors and contextual factors influenced the students' acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback. The findings related to these factors are reported separately below (5.5.4.1 and 5.5.4.2). The interactional influence of the student and contextual factors is also mentioned in this section whenever necessary.

### 5.5.4.1 Student factors

My study found the following student factors influenced the students' acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback: students' feedback beliefs, students' self-efficacy belief, student's prior knowledge of their own problems, students' knowledge and ability about writing conclusions, students' expectations, students' motivation to deal with teacher feedback, and students' consideration when interpreting teacher feedback. The relevant findings are reported below.

*Students' feedback beliefs*

In my study, the students' feedback beliefs were found to correlate with their acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback in some situations. In the background interview, A said that she valued organization feedback and considered that she would willingly and widely accept feedback on this issue. In practice, there was a consistency between what she said in the background interview and her widespread acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's organization-related, EA feedback. In the background interview, B believed that she was "a lazy learner" who preferred rote learning. Her

actual use of memorization to incorporate teacher feedback was also consistent with her belief about herself. C believed that she was a semi-resistor to teacher feedback. It seems that her actual semi-acceptance could be linked to what she stated in the background interview. However, it should be noted here that the students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was not always informed by their beliefs. For example, B believed that she would not spend too much time on positive feedback; but in fact, her acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was greatly influenced by the amount of positive feedback she received.

### *Students' self-efficacy belief: Students' confidence in their own writing*

The participants' decisions about their acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback were also influenced by their confidence in their own writing and in their views about writing. A had a great confidence in her understanding and use of cohesion and coherence, which might have been a decisive factor in her decisions to semi-accept or to reject Teacher T's feedback on it. Here is an example. On A's W3, Teacher T provided the following suggestion and explanation: "*Since' is much better. 'while' emphasizes 'happening-together', but here it should be cause-effect relationship.*" A only semi-accepted this feedback from Teacher T. Her explanation in the retrospective interview was: "*'Since' is better, but 'while' is not wrong.*" A's response to Teacher T shows that she had confidence in her use of "*while*" in her writing and she decided to semi-accept Teacher T's feedback because of it.

Student B's think-alouds and retrospective interviews reveal she was generally satisfied with her own writing, and there was a cause-effect relationship between her confidence in her own writing and her decision to reject Teacher T's EA feedback. During think-aloud sessions related to her W1, B often said:

> *No, this [what* Teacher *T said in her feedback] is not right. It [The structure of my arguments] is not confusing.*
> *I don't think it [the topic sentence] is problematic. This is because I think it connected the opening paragraph and the following paragraphs very well.*
> <div align="right">(From Student B's think-aloud for her W1)</div>

The above quotes indicate that B immediately denied what Teacher T said in her EA comments, and her refusal to take it up was closely associated with her confidence in her own writing (e.g., as shown by her remark "*I don't think…*").

In the case of Student C, the example given in Section 5.5.3 (about C's interpretation of the comment "*statement + exemplification is fine*") showed that one of the main reasons why C was resistant to fully accepting Teacher T's positive comment about her argumentation was that she picked up extra negative messages out of the feedback. At the same time, there was another reason why she decided to partly accept the teacher feedback. She also said the following in the retrospective interview: *"What Teacher T meant was there was room for improvement, but I feel it has already been good enough."* That is to say, C's confidence in her own writing played an interactional role in her refusal to take Teacher T's feedback.

### Student's prior knowledge of their own problems

Students B's and C's advance awareness of their own problems had a great influence on their acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's feedback. Sometimes, they fully accepted T's feedback on cohesion and coherence due to their prior knowledge of their writing problems. As a simple example, on B's W2, Teacher T provided an advisory comment: "*Avoid using the same connective repeatedly.*" Although Teacher T's comment was written bluntly, B accepted it without question. She said: "*I forgot to revise it before submission.*" B's explanation suggests that she had realized there was a problem when writing, and her knowledge of it was decisive in her quick decision to fully accept Teacher T's feedback.

Below is an example related to Student C's immediate acceptance of Teacher T's cohesion and coherence feedback. On her W1, Teacher T wrote the following comments: "*'Yourself', revise it as 'debaters' so as to maintain consistency of pronouns.*" When thinking aloud, C made a split-second decision to completely accept it: "*Absolutely true! It's necessary to revise 'yourself' to 'debaters'.*" The rationale behind this decision was also her prior knowledge of her writing problems: "*I have mixed up 'you', 'we', and other pronouns since high school.*"

### Students' knowledge of and ability to write a conclusion

My study found that Students B's and C's acceptance of Teacher T's feedback on their conclusion was subject to their knowledge about and ability to create a quality

conclusion. For example, B only read and acknowledged she noticed Teacher T's feedback on the conclusion of her W2, saying:

> *To tell the truth, I don't know how to produce a well-written concluding paragraph. When interpreting the conclusion comments, I only thought about my inability to conclude my writing with a summary, and then I went on to the next comment.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student B for her W2)*

When interpreting Teacher T's conclusion feedback on her W1, Student C did not fully accept it because she thought she had followed what her high school teacher taught her and what Teacher T said (*"The conclusion is not very convincing."*) seemed to contradict what she had learnt in the past. According to C, as well as B, the set format their high school teacher asked them to strictly follow when writing a conclusion had been ingrained in their writing practice. C and B both knew that the set format they had previously learned was mainly used to ensure that they attained high scores in the National Tertiary Matriculation Examination, but they didn't know other ways to conclude their writing.

### Students' expectations

The students' verbal reports during think-alouds and interviews showed that their acceptance of Teacher T's EA feedback was influenced by their expectations. For example, Student A just mainly acknowledged she noticed the feedback on her W3. A associated it with her expectation for helpful teacher feedback:

> *I must have an expectation. I anticipate that each of my writings exhibits more problems. Or, in this piece of writing, I probably have rectified the problems Teacher T identified before. But, the teacher should have a higher expectation for their students' writing, and I should be told to do more to improve. This time, by comparison, it [teacher feedback] is not as helpful for my growth as what I got before.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W3)*

In the retrospective interview for her W2, Student B commented: *"Now I just realized I prefer positive feedback. Because of it, I am interested in reading the last piece of feedback closely and carefully."* B's remarks show that her expectation for positive feedback shaped her reading of teacher feedback, which would in turn shape her decisions about her acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback. In the case of Student C, as mentioned in Section 5.5.2, she expected to get hedged feedback ("sugared pills"). That is to say, if this expectation was matched, her decision to fully accept Teacher T's EA feedback could be made more easily.

***Students' motivation to deal with teacher feedback***

The students' acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback was also found to be affected by their motivation to deal with teacher feedback. For example, on Student A's W3, Teacher T commented: "*This connective made your support very well-connected.*" In the retrospective interview, A said: "*I just read it and moved on. It is not necessary for me to spend time on it [feedback on connectives]. It [connective feedback] is not my focus of attention.*" In this example, A just acknowledged she noticed Teacher T's comment on connectives but she thought that it was of no great importance and her motivation to put effort into it was not high.

Here is another example of the connection between student motivation and their acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback. On Student C's W2, Teacher T pointed out that the pronoun "*ones*" she used in her writing should be replaced by the noun "*aspects*". C only read this revision and then moved to the next comment. In the retrospective interview, she explained her actions as follows: "*At that time [when thinking aloud], I felt it was a trivial matter. [Therefore,] I thought almost nothing about it and just scanned through it.*" In this instance, it appeared that what was crucial to C's acceptance of teacher feedback was motivation.

***Students' consideration: The teacher's efforts and attitudes towards feedback provision, and the teacher's understanding of their writing***

When Teacher T's feedback was approached, the students sometimes took teacher attitudes towards feedback provision into consideration and then decided whether to accept teacher feedback or not. For example, Teacher T wrote the following feedback on Student A's W2:

> *The supporting examples you used are not relevant enough. …The first example can show the point of 'meaningful', but you lack an example to show the point of 'happy'.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on Student A's W2)*

When thinking aloud and being interviewed for it, A stated that the information Teacher T provided in her comments was very detailed. She decided to fully accept it because of Teacher T's detailed consideration when providing feedback. A said that she herself had already forgotten why she included two points in her sub-topic sentence ("*Reading literature encourages and helps us to have a meaningful and*

*happy life*") when composing her writing. Moreover, as illustrated earlier, A felt that Teacher T's EA feedback on her W3 was "*simple*" and "*was not as helpful as before*". She also reported that, *"probably she [Teacher T] did not treat it [feedback provision] seriously this time*", which could have impacted her assimilation of it.

On the third argument of Student A's W2, Teacher T commented:

> *Your argumentation of the third topic sentence is not that convincing, or it fails to directly support your idea about Inspiration. Try this: For example, we can often draw inspiration from the amazing life experiences described in the literature work. ...*
>
> *(From Teacher T's Feedback on Student A's W2)*

In the retrospective interview, A made the following explanation for her semi-acceptance of the above comments during the first round of feedback interpretation:

> *It didn't take me a lot time to think about these comments. This was because the same problem had already been pointed out twice. When I read 'it fails to directly support your idea', I knew Teacher T told me again that my support was not relevant. When writing feedback, she always paid attention to details like this. ... But, there was another point: I didn't think Teacher T fully understood what I meant. ... If she were here, I'd like to have a talk with her about it. ...*
>
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2)*

A's retrospection indicates that, on the one hand, she accepted Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence because she considered that T provided detailed feedback and took feedback provision seriously. On the other hand, she refused to completely accept T's feedback for she felt T failed to understand what exactly she meant. This example shows how A's acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was influenced by her consideration of the teacher's attitudes toward writing feedback and the teacher's understanding of her writing. However, during the second round of feedback interpretation, A fully accepted and incorporated this feedback by interpreting it from the perspective of teacher intention.

### 5.5.4.2 Contextual factors

This section gives an overview of the contextual factors that are related to the participants' acceptance and uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback. First, the influence of textual-level context (feedback content, feedback delivery approaches and its changes across writing assignments, feedback intensity, feedback clarity, and feedback location) is outlined. Then, the findings about the influence of writing context and interpersonal context are reported.

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**a) Textual-level contextual factors**

*Feedback content: New information/perspective*

The content of teacher feedback influenced Student A's decision-making regarding fully/partly accepting or just reading (noticing) teacher feedback. For example, Teacher T entered the following comments on the opening paragraph of A's W2: *"You go to the point directly ☺; try to combine sentences when necessary or if you can."* In the retrospective interview, A's explained her acceptance and incorporation as follows:

> *I just had a glimpse at them. The comments are very simple, and there is nothing significant in them. Then I moved on and began to read paragraph two.* *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2)*

In this example, A was not greatly engaged in making the decision and her decision about how to treat the feedback was quickly formed when she found no new information in Teacher T's comments.

The following example illustrates how the new information contained in Teacher T's comments determined Student B's acceptance of teacher feedback. In B's W2, one of Teacher T's comments on cohesion and coherence said:

> *In general, the three paragraphs in the body part are not coherent in terms of your use of personal pronouns. You used 'one', 'his', and 'you' in three paragraphs respectively. It is necessary to be coherent as a whole.*

During her think-aloud, B responded: *"This is the first time I noticed this issue; I didn't know it before. I must use personal conjunctions coherently. … I'll pay attention to this issue next time."*

*Feedback delivery approaches*

Teacher T's explanatory comments were found to directly influence Student A's total acceptance of T's combination comments. For instance, on one of the supporting examples used in A's W2, Teacher T commented:

> *This example is not clearly stated (originally underlined and in Chinese). Not that effective. Can a description of details [in literature works] enliven us (originally underlined and in Chinese)? Pay attention to the relevance of the supporting details which should go closely around the topic.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on Student A's W2)*

In the retrospective interview, A explicitly talked about the great impact of Teacher T's explanation on her understanding and acceptance of the above comments:

> *After reading the first two points, I still couldn't gain an insight into my problem. Then I came across the point 'go closely around the topic', with which I immediately realized readers must be able to see the topic [sentence] is well-supported all the time. ...*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student A for her W2)*

Teacher T's hedged comments had a strong influence on Student C's acceptance decisions in general. Regarding hedged feedback Teacher T provided on her W2, C commented:

> *This time Teacher T gave me choices and it is up to me to choose which one to use. In her comments, she used 'or' quite a lot. Thus, this time I had a less defensive attitude toward her comments.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student C for her W2)*

This example clearly shows that C's willingness to accept teacher feedback was grounded in Teacher T's use of hedges.

Moreover, both Students B and C reported because Teacher T provided more positive and hedged feedback on their W2 and W3 than on their W1, they took a more accepting attitude toward teacher feedback because of this change. In the retrospective interview for her W2, B said she could patiently and carefully read Teacher T's feedback because she received comments that pointed out many strengths of her writing and she felt happy when reading them. C similarly recalled that she accepted much more of the EA feedback Teacher T provided on her W2 than on her W1 for Teacher T commented like a friend and she was willing to accept Teacher T's feedback on her W2.

*Feedback intensity*

In my study, feedback intensity referred to the degree to which teacher feedback repeatedly targeted the same issue. When they encountered teacher feedback on the same EA issues (e.g., supporting evidence) the second time, Students A and C both pointed out that they could make a quick decision to accept it. Below are examples.

In Student A's case, feedback intensity appeared to consistently influence her acceptance of teacher feedback. For example, when approaching Teacher T's

feedback on supporting evidence the second time, A said: *"This problem is the same as the one in the paragraph above",* which suggests that, to a large extent, she understood and accepted it. When C recognized the same issues were targeted the second time, her interpretation of this type of feedback was fast and her decision to accept it was made quickly.

In the retrospective interview for her W2, Student B explained how she accepted and incorporated Teacher T's comment "*Change 'one' to 'you, your'*": "*One can gradually improve his writing by reading literature."* About it, B said:

> *At first sight I understood this was the coherence issue that had already been commented on above. I also immediately understood 'his' [T highlighted with grey colour] in this sentence should be revised as 'your'. Later, I took notes about this in my second round of feedback interpretation.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student B's for her W2)*

In this example, the rationale behind B's quick decision to incorporate Teacher T's revisions into her notes was because she had already processed a similar piece of feedback that addressed the same issue (cohesion and coherence) before and the intensity of the feedback led to her quick decision.

*Clarity of teacher feedback*

The clarity of teacher feedback enabled Student A to decide to accept Teacher T's EA feedback as well. On the second body paragraph of A's W1, Teacher T wrote the following combination comments in both Chinese (comments underlined) and English (comments not underlined):

> <u>As for this paragraph, the beginning sentence is clear. That is, social practice can provide us a platform for communication and cooperation. What follows it should further develop this idea and provide relevant supporting evidence.</u> *The following sentences should provide details to further explain or illustrate about how or why it helps to communicate or cooperate. But, your following sentences fail to do that. Instead, you give not that coherent ideas.*
> *(From Teacher T's comments on Student A's W1)*

In the retrospective interview, A provided a simple explanation for her acceptance and incorporation of it. She said she mainly accepted and incorporated this feedback because of its clarity: *"The key is what Teacher T said is crystal clear, no matter whether it is written in English or in Chinese."*

Student C tended to semi-accept or just read Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence when teacher feedback was not clear and she was unable to comprehend it. For instance, when she saw one of Teacher T's explanatory comments (*"Thus, if revised, **it** would discuss three abilities required for debating. The structure could be much clearer and more logical."*), she just went on reading the next piece of teacher feedback because she was unable to understand what "it" represented. In this instance, C's failure to understand the unclear key word "it" stopped her initiating the decision-making process.

*Suitability of feedback to the students' existing knowledge or ability*

Whether teacher feedback was suitable to their existing knowledge/ability affected Students B's and C's acceptance of Teacher T's EA feedback on various issues. For example, when interpreting Teacher T's feedback on her W1, B often articulated her inability to understand the feedback, saying "*Why is it not logical? This is my question at that time. ... Then I didn't do anything about it and moved on to the next comment.*" The question B raised when approaching the feedback clearly indicated that it was beyond her ability to deal with it, and its incomprehensibility led her to decide to ignore it and not accept it.

*Feedback location*

The location of teacher feedback was also found to play a part in Student B's acceptance of it. For instance, in the retrospective interview for her W1, B explained her non-acceptance of Teacher T's feedback on topic statements as follows:

> *I feel it left me no impression and it was as if I had never ever read it before. When thinking aloud, probably I just glimpsed at it ... Usually, I just shoot a glimpse at the feedback placed at the end of a paragraph. I finish reading it in a flash.* (From the retrospective interview with Student B's for her W1)

In addition, when B felt that it was difficult linking Teacher T's EA comments on her W1 with her writing, she chose not to "*give much attention to them*". In brief, my study found that two types of feedback locations might shape B's acceptance of Teacher T's EA feedback: feedback located at the end of a paragraph and feedback standing alone or far from the issue it addressed. In those cases, B might just read it or fail to notice it because of its position.

**b) Writing context**

When to decide whether to fully/partly accept, just read, or reject Teacher T's EA feedback, Student C usually took the contexts in which her writing took place into consideration. A clear example of this comes from C's think aloud for her W2. In response to Teacher T's comments on the conclusion (*"…The three concluding sentences are not logical, or lack in logic; they also failed to refer back to the main topic."*), C accepted Teacher T's "criticism" without reservation after considering how her conclusion was written:

> *I wrote this concluding paragraph in a self-study English class. My mind was not very clear at that time since I just wanted to quickly finish it in class. In haste, I couldn't organize my thoughts well at all.*
> *(From the retrospective interview with Student C's for her W2)*

This quote illustrates that, by considering the situation in which her writing was composed, C seemed to find Teacher T's criticism justified. Meanwhile, as C lacked the knowledge and ability to write a quality conclusion, her acceptance of Teacher T's conclusion feedback was actually influenced by the interaction between student factors (her knowledge and ability to write quality conclusion) and contextual factors (the writing context).

**c) Interpersonal context**

The teacher-student relationship was greatly involved in Student C's acceptance and uptake of feedback. Specifically, C's acceptance and uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback was influenced by a power-equality relationship and relationship of trust. According to C, she incorporated more teacher feedback when Teacher T commented "*like a kind friend*" and teacher feedback reflected a friendly equal relationship than when Teacher T commented "*as an authoritative teacher*" and she received mainly direct feedback. C was also influenced by having a trusting teacher-student relationship. This could be observed by what C thought aloud on different occasions: "*Of course, the feedback Teacher T provided is right; after all, she is a university English teacher*".

**5.6 Findings for RQ2: Chapter summary**

Based on a quantitative and qualitative analyses of background interview, think-aloud, retrospective interview, and document data, this chapter reported findings

related to the micro-level classroom context, the students' acceptance and uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback, and the students' decision-making regarding their acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback. The findings showed that the participants' acceptance and uptake of Teacher T's EA feedback varied dramatically from one to the other. Student A started out deeply accepting and incorporating Teacher T's EA feedback, but that decreased over time. On the other hand, Student B mainly just noticed the feedback and Student C often could only semi-accepted and semi-incorporated teacher feedback because she did not know how to act on it. As to how they decided to accept and incorporate the teacher's feedback, my study found that it was related to the interaction among their cognitive, behavioral, and affective investment and the depth of their processing of the feedback. My study also found that student decision-making was mediated by some student factors, contextual factors, or the interaction between student factors and contextual factors.

# Chapter 6 Findings for RQ3

## 6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides answers to RQ3 (*According to the student and the teacher, to what extent does the teacher-student interaction through EA feedback help students improve, if the interaction is considered effective?*). As explained in the Methodology Chapter, I collected the ongoing and final interview data during and at the end of the study to assess the effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback and its helpfulness. In this chapter, the findings derived from the data I collected at different points in time and from different sources (both the teacher and the students) are organized around the following headings:

1) effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback (6.1);
2) student changes as feedback receivers (6.2); and
3) the helpfulness of teacher feedback on various EA issues and positive/negative EA feedback (6.3).

This chapter ends with a summary of the key findings for RQ3 (6.4).

## 6.1 Effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback

This section contains findings from the ongoing interviews and the final assessment interviews (6.1.1-6.1.2). To a large extent, both confirmed the effectiveness of teacher-student communication via EA feedback.

### 6.1.1 Findings from the ongoing interviews

Table 6.1 summarizes the participants' ongoing ratings of the effectiveness of the feedback communication over a course of one semester. Teacher T and the students' ratings showed that they perceived the feedback interaction effective in general.

**Table 6.1 Effectiveness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback**

| Feedback interaction | Participants' ratings | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Teacher T** | **Student A** | **Student B** | **Student C** |
| W1-related interaction | | | 80% | 80% |
| W2-related interaction | 80%-90% | 90% | 90% | 90% |
| W3-related interaction | | | 90% | 85% |
| **Helpfulness percentage** | 80%-90% | 90% | 87% | 85% |

*(Note: W1=first cause-effect writing task; W2=second exemplification writing task; W3=third free-technique writing task)*

When asked in each of the three ongoing interviews the question about the effectiveness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback, Teacher T approached the issue mainly from the perspectives of understandability and the students' understanding of her feedback. Teacher T felt the feedback communication was effective because her feedback was easy to understand and that the students could understand most of it. According to T's assessment, her EA feedback on each of the students' three writing assignments was 80%-90% effective/understandable. For example, in the ongoing interview related to her feedback on the first cause-effect writing assignment, T reported: *"Generally speaking, I don't think it's a problem for them to understand 80-90% of my feedback comments."*

Student A seemed to confirm Teacher T's assessment. In ongoing interviews, she said:

*1) Basically, we [Teacher T and A] could understand each other very well.*
            *(From the W1-related ongoing interview with Student A)*
*2) I'm certain that I can understand most of my teacher's EA feedback very well.*            *(From the W2-related ongoing interview with Student A)*
*3) It's easy to follow most of my teacher's EA feedback comments.*
            *(From the W3-related ongoing interview with Student A)*

A's remarks showed that, similar to Teacher T, she saw the effectiveness of the interaction through the feedback from the perspective of teacher-student mutual understanding (based on the first quote) and the students' understanding of teacher feedback (based on the second and third quotes). She believed that the teacher-student communication went very well. Numerically, A reported each time it was 90% effective.

In Student B's mind, the teacher-student interactions she experienced were not equally effective. B felt the communication related to the first cause-effect writing assignment was the least effective (80%), while the other two rounds (related to her W2 and W3) were more effective (90%). B used the following example to explain when she felt the teacher-student interaction became more effective:

*Take the logic issue for example. My teacher pointed out there was a logic problem in my first writing, but I couldn't understand it until now [when interpreting Teacher T's feedback on her W2]. ... This time I feel it suddenly clicked and I could understand and accept most of Teacher T's EA feedback.*
            *(From the W2-related ongoing interview with Student B)*

Student C seemed to equate effective communication of feedback with a two-way dialogue in which both the teacher and the student were involved. In the ongoing interviews related to her W1, W2, and W3, C pointed out the three rounds of two-way communication were 80%, 90%, and 85% effective respectively. She believed that the first round of dialogue or communication with Teacher T was not very well established (80%) and Teacher T's EA feedback often *"put her on the defensive"*. To C, the communication for the second round of feedback was better (90%). She said in the interview: *"I was not in a defensive state this time and I strongly felt a sense of involvement."* As to the effectiveness of Teacher T's EA feedback on her W3 (the free-technique writing assignment), C said it was in the middle of the previous two (85%).

### 6.1.2 Findings from the final interviews

As explained in the Methodology Chapter, to enhance the reliability and validity of the answers given to RQ3, Teacher T and the students were also asked to evaluate the helpfulness of teacher-student interactions in the final assessment interview. Below presents what each participant reported in the final interviews.

Teacher T's answer to the open question "*What do you think of the effectiveness of the feedback interaction this semester*?" T acknowledged its effectiveness from four perspectives. In the final interview, she said:

> *In my opinion, as to our communication through the feedback, it worked. You see, when commenting on their W2 and W3, I frequently wrote positive comments about the strengths of their writing. In their new writing, what I mentioned before in my feedback was not that problematic any more. They, especially B, made obvious progress in structure, cohesion and coherence, and logic, those issues I emphasized in my feedback. I saw the efforts she [Student B] made. In her W2, she followed my feedback on her W1, although it seemed that she just applied my comments mechanically. A and C are really good student writers, but they still need help in terms of structure and logic, and they also improved.*
> *(From the final interview with Teacher T)*

In this long quote, the four perspectives Teacher T used to support her opinion that the feedback interaction was effective are:

1) the increase in her positive feedback
   (indicated by "*I frequently wrote positive comments…*");
2) the students' cross-assignment improvement
   (indicated by "*They…made obvious progress*");
3) the efforts the students devoted to using teacher feedback in new writing

(indicated by "*I saw the efforts she [Student B] made*"); and

4) its suitability to the needs of the students
(indicated by "*they still need help in terms of structure and logic.*").

In the above quote, Teacher T confirmed the contribution of the feedback interaction to B's learning in particular, although she believed B could only apply what she said in her EA comments in a mechanical way at first.

However, Teacher T seemed unsure about the extent to which the teacher-student interaction was effective since there were no chances to interact after the commented writing was returned to the students. She said:

> *... there were no follow-up interactions between us, be it face-to-face or in written form. It's a pity that we didn't have a face-to-face opportunity and none of them gave me a second draft. After their writing was returned to them, no one ever came to me, telling me whether they agreed or disagreed with my comments or sharing with me their ideas about my comments. I felt it's alright even if they came to me to argue for their writing. But, I didn't get any direct response from them. I saw the effectiveness of my feedback in their new writing, but I still did not feel confident about it.*
> *(From the final interview with Teacher T)*

Student A believed her interaction with Teacher T was effective overall and she appreciated the way Teacher T wrote feedback. A felt Teacher T wrote feedback as if she was creating her own writing, which was clear, systematic and well-structured:

> *Without this interaction, my pace of improvement would be very, very slow. So, it is really helpful. ... Teacher T not only commented on my specific writing problems but also provide comments at the end of my writing to make a summary. It seemed that she was writing her own article since the comments she wrote from the beginning to the end of my writing seemed to be well connected. I feel this way of writing feedback made her feedback explicit.*
> *(From the final interview with Student A)*

However, A felt that in some cases Teacher T misunderstood her and their communication did not go very well, but she reported the misunderstandings were not her teacher's fault. They happened because she did not successfully transfer her idea in mind into her writing. In the final interview, A said:

> *Generally, there were no communication problems occurring. The only problem was that in my writing I failed to get my meaning clearly expressed and Teacher T did not understand what I wrote. But, this did not happen often, just occasionally.*
> *(From the final interview with Student A)*

Student B's answer to the question "*What do you think of the effectiveness of the feedback interaction this semester*" was simple. Her response was: "Quite good; a process of becoming better and better." B said the communication she and Teacher T engaged in for her first cause-effect writing assignment was the least effective because what Teacher T wrote and what she could understand did not match: "*It was really difficult to figure out what she meant when reading it for the first time.*" Although unable to thoroughly understand Teacher T's feedback on her W1, B said she strictly followed it when writing W2. B believed Teacher T's feedback on her W2 started a good communication cycle: *"the more I could understand, the better our communication became."* Interestingly, B said*: "I feel both Teacher T and I myself grew up."*

When answering the same open question about the effectiveness of the feedback interaction, Student C's description showed that she also went through interactive processes that changed from being not good to being good:

> *When providing feedback on my W1, Teacher T sounded like a critic and director; and the feedback communication between us flew vertically (downward and upward). The following communications were interactive and equal; it is very easy to accept her feedback on my W2 and W3 when I was reading it.                    (From the final interview with Student C)*

In short, findings stemming from the final assessment interviews showed that, although sometimes teacher-student miscommunication happened, the participants perceived the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback to be effective in the long term.

## 6.2 Student changes as feedback receivers

In the final review, the students also reported that they became better feedback receivers after the feedback sessions on the three writing assignments of a semester. Students A and C reported that they could quickly identify teacher intent in EA feedback. The following are quotes of A and C said in the final interview:

> *Now, I can deal with teacher feedback more efficiently and I know how to deal with it. Moreover, I can quickly understand the most important issues in teacher feedback, and quickly came to realize what my core problems are.*
> *(From the final interview with Student A)*

*Now, when dealing with teacher feedback, I know what to focus on and pay more attention to my core problems, that is, what my teacher really wants to let me know.                  (From the final interview with Student C)*

Moreover, C said that she did not feel defensive any more when dealing with teacher feedback. She believed that she benefitted greatly from the strategy she used to decipher the meaning of Techer T's feedback: "*In the past, first, I justified my writing. Now I accept Teacher T's feedback before interpreting it.*"

Student B also said she could better deal with teacher feedback. She said in the final interview:

*Now, I have experience in dealing with teacher feedback. I know how to approach it and I've developed more control over dealing with teacher feedback. As I have the criteria and standards to evaluate a piece of writing, now I can give myself feedback.    (From the final interview with Student B)*

However, B did not think she had more strategies to attend to teacher feedback, such as seeking help from other resources or people.

Apart from what the students reported directly about the changes they experienced as feedback receivers, what they said in the final interviews also reflects that they had improved as feedback receivers. For example, as mentioned in Section 6.1.2, Student A pointed out that it was her failure to express her meaning clearly that led to teacher-student miscommunication. In the final interview, C also mentioned that she should take responsibility for the breakdown in the feedback communication related to her first cause-effect writing. She felt that the failure of communication resulted from the poor quality of her first piece of writing. Being able to distinguish where the responsibility lay suggests that A and C seem to have gained deeper insight into teacher feedback, which shows that they became better feedback receivers.

## 6.3 Helpfulness of teacher feedback on various EA issues and positive/negative EA feedback

Table 6.2 gives a summary of the participants' evaluation of the helpfulness of various EA feedback provided by Teacher T.

**Table 6.2 Helpfulness of EA feedback**

| Helpfulness of EA feedback | T | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| feedback on supporting evidence | helpful | very helpful | very helpful | very helpful |
| feedback on coherence | helpful | very helpful | helpful | helpful |
| feedback on conjunction | very helpful | helpful | helpful | very helpful |
| feedback on topic statement & topic sentence | very helpful | helpful | very helpful | very helpful |
| feedback on conclusion | not very helpful | | | |
| positive EA feedback | Both were needed. | "*hard to say*" | good | not helpful |
| direct, negative EA feedback | | very helpful | bad but helpful | very helpful |

Table 6.2 shows that, regarding the helpfulness of the different types of EA feedback, the results varied. However, there was agreement among the participants that the feedback on the concluding paragraph was not very effective and the students made limited progress after processing it. Teacher T offered the following explanation for her evaluation of the helpfulness of her conclusion feedback:

> *When commenting on the concluding paragraph, I was usually so tired that I couldn't think straight any more. Now, I know my conclusion feedback on each of the students' writing assignments was not that clear, not that comprehensive, not that, ehh … Probably, ehh… it was also because their [the student'] conclusion was short. The biggest problem was that I failed to provide them with suggestions or just provided them with simple suggestions, and then my conclusion feedback was not very clear.*
> *(From the final interview with Teacher T)*

In the final assessment interview, Student A expressed a similar opinion: "*Teacher T focused on the body paragraphs. Comparatively, she probably did not give a lot of attention to it [the concluding paragraph].*" Student B also shared some of Teacher T's ideas about the clarity of teacher feedback, stating "*I don't think Teacher T's conclusion feedback clearly let me know how to write conclusion.*" Student C felt Teacher T's conclusion feedback raised her attention to her problem with it, but it was not actionable and thus not very helpful. She said in the final interview:

> *For example, Teacher T wrote many comments on the concluding paragraph of my second writing assignment. This raised my awareness that I had problems with it. But as they were not practically actionable, in my new writing, I'll continue to use the format I learnt from high school.*
> *(From the final interview with Student C)*

In general, the above quotes indicated that Teacher T's conclusion feedback was not considered helpful because teacher attention to the final part was lacking and the feedback on it was not clear and not actionable.

In contrast, Table 6.2 shows that there was disagreement as to the participants' evaluation of the helpfulness of positive and direct, negative EA feedback. In the final interview, Teacher T did not give definite answers regarding the helpfulness of positive and negative feedback. She felt that the students needed both positive and direct, negative feedback although positive feedback sounded good and people might like it. Student A said that "*positive feedback was not helpful*", but "*receiving honest, positive feedback is really good.*" In general, Student A valued direct, negative feedback. Student B expressed her preference for positive feedback, but she also believed that "*to be helpful, the teacher must point out our problems.*" In the final interview, Student C confirmed the significant helpfulness of direct, negative feedback although she felt unhappy when reading it. She said:

> *I found that reading positive feedback and feeling happy at that moment had no long-term influence on me. On the contrary, direct, negative feedback raised my attention to my problem because it made me feel so bad and it is unforgettable.*                     (From the final interview with Student C)

Moreover, Table 6.2 reveals that the students all felt that teacher feedback on supporting evidence was very helpful. Students A and C both said that Teacher T concentrated her efforts on supporting evidence and gave a large amount of feedback on that issue. A said: "*Teacher T wrote not only in-text but also end comments about it. I feel this repetition was one of the most important reasons why it is helpful.*" C said: "*Even if you cannot understand it at the beginning, you can understand it eventually [because of teacher attention to it].*" In the final interview, Student B used how she accepted Teacher T's feedback on Michael Yu as an example to show the significant helpfulness of teacher feedback on supporting evidence (See Section 5.3.2 in Chapter 5 for more information), saying Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence "*left a deep impression on my [her] mind.*"

Teacher T was sure about the helpfulness of her feedback on supporting evidence because "*the issues of supporting evidence and coherence were too difficult to address.*" However, she did not believe that the students had mastered self-regulatory skills after receiving her feedback on supporting evidence only three times. In the final interview, Students A, B, and C also mentioned that teacher feedback on supporting evidence helped them move toward greater self-regulation, but they still had not achieved full self-regulation to deal with the issue of supporting evidence in

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new writings. C believed that "*it depends on what the writing topic on which we are asked to write*". In this sense, it can be said that Teacher T and the students had a similar opinion about the helpfulness of teacher feedback on supporting evidence.

In the final interview, when Teacher T and the students were asked to evaluate the helpfulness of teacher feedback on cohesion and coherence, they mainly assessed Teacher T's feedback on connectives and Teacher T's feedback on coherence at different levels of their writing (e.g., intra-sentential coherence and overall coherence). Teacher T reported that she was confident that her feedback on connectives, as well as her feedback on topic statements and topic sentences, was very helpful. According to Teacher T,

> *This is because it is much easier for the students to accept your [their teachers'] feedback on connectives and topic sentences. It is a little bit like error feedback. When you point out their problems with connectives and topic sentences [in your feedback], they can understand whether they were right or wrong. Comparatively, the issues like conjunctions and topic sentences are less difficult to address.*
>
> *(From the final interview with Teacher T)*

Teacher T believed that Students A, B, and C all developed their ability to deal with connectives, topic sentences, and topic statements because of teacher feedback. She said:

> *If I could use marks to indicate their development, I would give B 50 points for her ability to deal with these issues before feedback. After feedback I would give her 70 points. A and C could get 80 points after feedback (60 points before feedback). Although they still can't write perfectly, I think at least there are topic sentences and thesis statements in their writing.*
>
> *(From the final interview with Teacher T)*

Teacher T's opinions about the great helpfulness of her feedback on connectives, topic sentences, and topic statements were shared by Student C. C pointed out that the teacher feedback on connectives, topic sentences, and topic statement "*made a notable impression*" on her. In C's view, Teacher T's connectives feedback helped her completely understand that direct transfer of Chinese conjunctions into English did not work. Also, C felt that Teacher T's feedback on these issues was "*easy to understand*" and "*actionable*". She said in the final interview: "*Now, if I were asked to read my classmates' writing, I would unconsciously look at whether there were topic sentences in their work.*"

However, C believed that her use of connectives in new writing tasks was still problematic. In the interview, she said:

> *I would be at a loss as to what to do in a longer piece of writing where there were several body paragraphs to be structured and more connectives to be used. I want to use 'firstly, secondly, and thirdly' in every paragraph. In my third writing, to avoid repetition, I used 'firstly, secondly, and thirdly' in one paragraph, and "on the one hand and on the other hand" in the other paragraph. But I did not know whether my use of "on the one hand and on the other hand" was right or wrong when writing. Teacher T explained its usage in class, but I forgot exactly how to use it.*
>
> *(From the final interview with Student C)*

By comparison, Students A and B were confident in their ability to deal with English connectives before receiving teacher feedback. As such, they considered that Teacher T's feedback led to no great changes for them. In the final interview, A insisted that Teacher T's feedback on connectives provided her with no further insight but "*coherence is important.*" A said that she "*had already realized this and understood the use of conjunctions cannot guarantee your writing is coherent before the feedback.*" B felt that Teacher T always gave her positive connectives feedback. She said: "*I don't have a big problem with it [use of* connectives*], and I paid a lot of attention to this issue when writing as well since I feel it is important.*"

Student A also believed that she had gained deep insight into the issues of topic sentences and topic statements and had the ability to deal with these issues before feedback. So, according to A, Teacher T's feedback was helpful, but it just slightly helped her improve. Differently, Student B felt that she benefitted greatly from Teacher T's feedback on topic sentences and topic statements since she "*used to write long, indirect topic sentences and introduction.*" B also agreed with Teacher T and C that teacher feedback on topic sentences and topic statements was "*actionable.*"

As mentioned above, Teacher T felt that her feedback on coherence was not overly helpful because the issue of coherence was difficult to address. In the final interviews, Teacher T, and Students B and C all felt the application of teacher feedback on coherence was not easy and so it was not that helpful. Among the participants, only Student A felt that coherence feedback was very helpful because it conveyed useful insights to her about how to organize sentences and texts in a logical

and coherent order. Furthermore, A said that Teacher T's feedback on coherence showed her the criteria and standards to evaluate a piece of written text. She said:

*Now, I'll consider whether my sentences are coherent and whether my writing is logical when I'm writing my assignments. Teacher T's feedback on coherence taught me how to evaluate whether my sentences and my writing are good or bad. Her feedback gave me criteria and standards.*
*(From the final interview with Student A)*

In conclusion, the students in my study all believed that, as the result of Teacher T's direct, negative EA feedback, they became better writers and acquired better abilities to deal with the issues of supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, topic sentences, and topic statements. Students A and B even felt that they had acquired self-regulation skills to deal with the issue of connectives.

## 6.4 Findings for RQ3: Chapter summary

This chapter reported the following results stemming from the ongoing and the concluding interview data. First, it presented the findings about the teacher and the student participants' overall evaluations of the effectiveness of the feedback interactions over the semester. In the ongoing interviews related to each feedback interaction, all participants reported that the feedback communication was effective. Findings derived from the final interview data indicated that the student participants felt that sometimes teacher-student miscommunication happened over the course of the semester, but the teacher and student participants' overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the feedback interactions was still quite positive. Second, the student participants' answers to the question of whether teacher feedback helped them became better feedback receivers were reported. The students all perceived the teacher-student interactions via EA feedback helped them become better feedback receivers. Finally, this chapter reported the participants' assessment of the helpfulness of various aspects of EA feedback. Results showed that the participants' perceptions varied. However, the students all considered that teacher feedback on supporting evidence was very helpful and they benefitted a lot from Teacher T's direct, negative feedback.

# Chapter 7 Discussion

## 7.0 Introduction

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the results of the three RQs addressed in my study have been reported. This chapter provides a discussion of the results of each RQ in three sections (7.1-7.3). In the final section (7.4), the chapter summary is presented.

## 7.1 Findings for RQ1: Empirically- and theoretically-based discussion

As shown in earlier chapters, to find answers to RQ1 (*When writing feedback, how does the Chinese EFL teacher decide what EA concerns to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback?*), my study collected and analysed teacher data (teacher feedback, background interview, think-alouds, and retrospective interview data). For RQ1, Chapter 4 mainly reported findings regarding:

- the EA issues teacher feedback focused on;
- how the teacher decided to provide feedback on these EA issues;
- the approaches the teacher used to deliver EA feedback; and
- how the teacher decided to use these approaches to deliver EA feedback.

In this section, these four aspects of the findings on RQ1 are discussed in four sub-sections (7.1.1-7.1.4). Each sub-section begins with an empirically-based discussion of findings, and then offers a theoretically-based discussion of findings (from the perspectives of sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy). This section concludes with a summary of what has been discussed (7.1.5).

### 7.1.1 The EA issues teacher feedback focused on

In my study, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Teacher T's feedback indicated that her feedback was closely related to argument construction and mainly focused on the following issues: *supporting evidence*, *cohesion and coherence, topic statement and topic sentence (chiefly from the angle of whether the topic and topic sentences were stated directly and concisely), conclusion*, and *the overall organization*. My study also found that T's feedback foci were relatively stable.

**The discussion based on empirical evidence**

As the earlier review of literature concluded, most of the research that touched upon L2 teachers' non-error feedback just reported the general issues teacher feedback

focused on. For instance, Lee (2008b) and Li (2016) reported that Chinese EFL teachers' feedback focused on content, organization, vocabulary and grammar. In my study, Teacher T's non-error feedback was broken down further. To a certain extent, similar foci were found in experienced EFL and ESL writing teachers' feedback. Z. Wang's (2011) study highlighted that, when an experienced Chinese EFL teacher wrote feedback on expository writing, she focused on supporting evidence (in Wang's term "topic development" and "rhetorical functions"), cohesion, and coherence. Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) and Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) studies indicated that the major concerns of the experienced ESL teachers were also how to effectively develop ideas with supporting evidence and how to explicitly create a coherent, logical argument when they provided feedback on students' expository writing. However, in Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) paper, the researchers chose to use the terminology "idea feedback" to refer to teacher feedback on argumentation and supporting evidence. Based on the analytical samples given by Hyland and Hyland (e.g., *"I would have liked you to give some examples of countries which have one or the other system as the material is rather difficult to grasp/understand without concrete/real life examples."*), it can be determined that it also referred to teacher feedback on argumentation of ideas/points or supporting evidence.

It seems that the consistency of these research findings can largely be explained by teacher experience and the genre of the writing tasks. The teacher participants in these above-mentioned studies all had a certain degree of teaching experience and they all wrote comments on expository writing (non-academic or academic). These common findings seem to suggest experienced genre teachers may focus on argument construction when they provide feedback on expository writing.

According to Min (2013), even experienced teachers struggle with how to comment on argumentation and supporting evidence. When thinking aloud during feedback provision, Teacher T, who had 7 years of teaching experience, also experienced difficulties with delivering feedback on supporting evidence. As reported in Chapter 4, when commenting on supporting evidence, she sometimes articulated her feelings about the difficulty in giving good revisions. Here, my point is that to help the teachers provide argumentation feedback more easily and effectively, teachers' feedback on supporting evidence is clearly an issue requiring continued investigation.

Concerning teacher feedback on cohesive devices, my study found that Teacher T concentrated on connectives and referential pronouns (as reported in Chapter 4). As cohesion may be realized through different devices, such as metatext (e.g., an advanced organiser), transitions, reference, and other ways (e.g., substitution, ellipsis, synonyms, etc.), in-depth studies devoted wholly to cohesion feedback are needed in order to produce a thorough picture of teacher feedback on each type of cohesion. In previous studies, Bitchener and Basturkmen (2010) and Z. Wang (2011) reported ESL and EFL teachers provided feedback on *metatext,* an important cohesive device that is used less in Chinese writing than in English writing (Kim & Lim, 2013). Considering that it may be very difficult for some Chinese EFL writers, it is important for researchers to focus their attention on teacher feedback on metatext.

My study particularly reported that Teacher T commented on topic statements and topic sentences from the perspective of the rhetoricality of style (i.e., direct and concise statement of topics in the opening paragraph and arguments in topic sentences). So far, only a limited number of L2 feedback/assessment studies has ever mentioned teachers'/test raters' focus on the rhetoricality of style (e.g., Junqueira & Payant, 2015). However, researchers' inadequate attention does not mean that the issue of style is not important. According to Hinds (1990), the oriental style involves a delayed introduction of purpose, and Chinese EFL students' indirect topic/thesis statements and topic sentences are often buried somewhere in the texts. That is to say, although ineffective style is often viewed as an error issue (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2010), it should not be automatically diagnosed as symptomatic of problems on a surface level. Sometimes, it may be a cultural issue. It needs Chinese EFL teachers' particular attention and as such, it should not be ignored by researchers.

Most prior feedback studies did not look at the cross-assignment and cross-student changes of teachers' foci. My study found that Teacher T's feedback foci across student assignments were relatively stable. Best's (2011) and Clements' (2008) studies yielded different findings. However, as Best and Clements investigated novice teachers' feedback practices and Teacher T in my study had seven-year teaching experience, the different results perhaps tell us that the feedback practices of more experienced teachers are more likely to be stable and coherent across writing

tasks. Ferris, et al. (1997) found that less non-error feedback was provided on narrative assignments than on other genres of writing assignments (e.g., argumentative writing assignments). By implication, the other possible reason why Teacher T's feedback foci remained comparatively stable was that she provided feedback only on one genre (exposition) in a semester.

Moreover, my study reported a relative cross-student stability in Teacher T's feedback foci. This result seems to suggest that T's feedback foci were not greatly influenced by the students' writing ability (Students A and C were identified by Teacher T as higher-level writers). As such, this finding appears not to corroborate the finding obtained in Cohen's (1991) study, which showed the EFL teacher provided more argumentation-related comments on lower performers' writing than on the higher and intermediate performers' writing. However, the inconsistent finding can be explained by how "student ability" is evaluated in the two studies. In Cohen's study, the students' writing abilities (higher, intermediate, and lower performers) were judged according to their control of argumentation-related issues. As such, Cohen's lower performing participant, whose writing exhibited more argumentation problems, tended to receive more teacher feedback on logical reasoning issues. In my study, Teacher T evaluated Students A, B, and C's writing abilities in a general way (control of organization, ideas, and language). That is to say, although Students A and C were considered to be better writers, they still might have had some major EA issues and, therefore, needed EA comments. In this sense, Teacher T's feedback, though appearing to be stable across students, was indeed adaptive to student abilities to deal with EA issues. Moreover, Cohen's and my studies reveal that, in future studies, the specific information about how students' abilities are judged and evaluated must be provided.

**The theoretical discussion**
As explained in the Literature Review Chapter, the sociocognitive perspective of teacher written feedback considers it as a complex, dynamic system in which feedback itself, teacher factors, student factors, and contextual factors interact inseparably with each other. In other words, one of the basic principles that underlies the sociocognitive approach is the inseparability principle. Obviously, my study adds support to taking a complex, dynamic (sociocognitive) view to conceptualize

"*teacher written feedback*". This is because the above empirically-based discussion revealed it is virtually impossible to talk about the feedback itself without talking about what teachers bring to the feedback process (e.g., teacher experience), what students bring to the feedback process (e.g., student ability), the teaching/learning contexts (e.g., the genre of writing tasks), and the sociocultural background (e.g., the oriental writing style).

Literature on genre pedagogy has shown that this instructional approach aims to help student writers to acquire and apply rhetorical and discursive knowledge (e.g., how to organize writing, how to begin/end writing, how to write in an appropriate style). In my study, the finely grained analysis of Teacher T's feedback comments on student writing showed that she particularly looked at issues such as whether the topic was stated directly and concisely in the opening paragraph, and whether the (sub)topic sentences in the body paragraphs were written directly and concisely. Insights from these data are that Teacher T often commented from the perspective of Chinese-English differences. The views T conveyed in the background interview about the Chinese indirect and circular argumentation also show that she considered that there are rhetorical and discursive differences across languages and cultures. Overall, my study seems to show that EFL teachers may look at genre pedagogy from the orientation of contrastive rhetoric. However, as contrastive rhetoric has come in for criticism for failing to take into account the dynamic quality of discourse since the 1970s, it is highly suggested that the teachers who follow the principles of genre-based instruction be reminded not to oversimplify and overgeneralize the differences between languages and cultures.

### 7.1.2 How the teacher's feedback foci were decided

My study captured the following teacher factors and contextual factors that informed or influenced how Teacher T decided on her feedback foci:

- **teacher beliefs** about feedback foci,
- heightened **teacher awareness** of what to focus on, and
- **the examination orientation of the traditional Chinese educational culture and Teacher T's classroom instruction**.

**The discussion based on empirical evidence**

Teacher data obtained in my study showed that, to a large extent, Teacher T had already decided what EA concerns to focus on before she set out to deliver feedback

on student writing, and that her feedback practices could be distilled down to an issue of teacher belief/cognition. In the background interview, T not only explained her beliefs about what to focus on, but also the sources of her beliefs (e.g., her PhD research experience with discourse analysis, her knowledge of student writing problems and difficulties with EA issues, her preference for a concise writing style, her pedagogical attention and goals, her confidence in dealing with students' EA problems, and the influence of CET-4/6 examination). It is quite possible that possessing a clear view of her feedback beliefs (about what to focus on) and the sources of her beliefs led T to develop practices consistent with her beliefs.

My finding about teacher belief-informed feedback foci is similar to Z. Wang's (2011), which also indicated that a Chinese EFL teacher's feedback foci on EA issues was consistent with her feedback beliefs. Meanwhile, this finding is aligned with Diab (2005b) in revealing that an ESL teacher's feedback foci on the rhetorical issues (organization, development, logic and coherence, thesis statement, and audience) of her students' assignments consistently reflected her beliefs.

However, quite often, previous studies also reported that the teacher's feedback foci were not informed by teacher beliefs. Junqueira and Payant (2015) found, although an ESL teacher strongly believed that she would always address the organization and development issues first, in actual practice she provided significantly more feedback on language errors (84%). However, this difference is not unexpected. This is because Junqueira and Payant's teacher participant was a novice writing teacher who had little teaching and responding experience. In Clements' (2008) study, the novice teacher participant could not even adjust to the physical demands of commenting at the beginning of the course.

Also, when thinking aloud to respond to student writing, Teacher T came to realize the EA issues in the students' expository writing were more problematic than she had thought previously and then she decided to give these issues more attention when providing feedback. This finding shows that Teacher T's feedback practices provided her with a better understanding of students' writing difficulties and raised her awareness of her belief about feedback focus. It suggests that teacher

beliefs/cognition are evolving and dynamic in nature (Borg, 2015), which accordingly makes dynamics one of the key features of teacher written feedback.

To date, several feedback studies have found that the evolution of teacher beliefs affected teachers' responding practices (e.g., Best, 2011; Ferris et al., 1997; Feuerherm, 2011/2012; Min, 2013). However, in these studies, the reasons for the heightened awareness varied. The change in Ferris et al.'s (1997) teacher participant resulted from her participation in two research projects related to the teaching of writing and teacher commentary at the same time. Best's, Feuerherm's and Min's studies were action research, so the teacher researchers were conscious of developing and increasing their awareness of their feedback beliefs and the need to improve their feedback practices. In Teacher T's case, it seems that her awareness was raised mainly due to her feedback practices.

Although predominately belief-informed, Teacher T's decisions about providing EA feedback were also mediated by the interrelated sociocultural and pedagogical contexts. Because of the influence of the traditional Chinese examination culture, one of the writing objectives T set for her writing assignments was to prepare her students for the coming CET-4 test at the end of semester. In this sense, my study found that it is due to the influence of the inseparable sociocultural background and pedagogical context that T decided to provide feedback on EA issues. My finding corroborated Lee's (2008a) report that the Chinese EFL teachers' feedback beliefs and practices were deeply affected by the examination orientation in the education system and culture, which suggests that one of the roles Chinese EFL teachers take on when responding to student writing is a test assessor.

**The theoretical discussion**
The empirically-based discussion provided in this section (7.1.2) supports the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback which indicates that teachers provide feedback as a "mindbodyworld" ecology. For one thing, as just mentioned above, the formation of Teacher T's decisions about what to focus on was not independent of the interaction between teacher factors (e.g., teacher belief about feedback foci, teacher role as a test assessor) and contextual factors (e.g., pedagogical purpose, examination culture and pedagogical objective). Meanwhile, Teacher T's feedback

beliefs informed her feedback practices/actions and her practices/actions raised her awareness of her beliefs about feedback foci (the inseparability of mind and body). As such, it can be clearly seen that Teacher T based her decisions about feedback foci on the workings of the inseparable and interrelated mind (e.g., Teacher T's feedback beliefs), body (e.g., Teacher T's actions) and world/contexts (e.g., examination culture and pedagogical purpose/context).

According to Hyland (2007), genre teachers are reflective teachers and they are encouraged to take a critical look at their work so as to be in a better position to make informed decisions when providing feedback. Although it is not possible to draw a definite conclusion that Teacher T was a genre teacher (In the background interview, T considered she took a discourse-based view to teach exposition writing), my study showed that her awareness of student problems with EA increased because she spent a great deal of time and energy reflecting on her feedback practices (See more discussion of teacher reflection in Section 7.1.4). In addition to reflection, as mentioned earlier in this section, teacher participants in previous studies (e.g., Best, 2011; Min, 2013) used action research to recognize and develop their feedback beliefs. By implication, apart from developing reflective feedback practice, genre teachers are also encouraged to do action research to increase their awareness of their feedback beliefs and improve their feedback practices.

### 7.1.3 The approaches the teacher used to deliver EA feedback

In my study, the following findings related to Teacher T's approaches to deliver EA feedback emerged:

- From the perspective of internal qualities, Teacher T used **evaluator-response feedback** (74%; e.g., *feedback indicating problems/strengths*; *advice/suggestion*, *revision*), **instructor-response feedback** (22%; e.g., *feedback making explanations*), and **reader-response feedback** (4%) to deliver her EA feedback; and Teacher T's EA feedback tended to be delivered in a hedged manner.
- From the perspective of scaffolding degree, one third of Teacher T's comments were delivered as **single-statement feedback** while two thirds were **combination feedback,** which usually consisted of problem/strength indication, explanation, advice/suggestion, and/or revision.
- From the perspective of language channel, Teacher T's comments were delivered **half in English and half in Chinese**.
- From the perspective of cross-assignment/student differences, Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches remained relatively stable across writing assignments and students. The clearly observable differences across writing

tasks were **the steady increase** of T's positive feedback and hedged feedback, and **the decrease** of her explanatory feedback and direct feedback. In terms of cross-student differences, **Student B** was found to receive more comments in total and more positive feedback than Students A and C, among whom C received the least amount of EA feedback in total.

In the following, the main findings about Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches are discussed empirically and theoretically (7.1.3.1 and 7.1.3.2).

### 7.1.3.1 Empirically-based discussion: Various feedback delivery approaches
*Strength-oriented feedback, problem-oriented feedback, and suggestions*
Concerning the approaches L2 teachers usually use to deliver non-error feedback, the findings available at present appear not to be completely consistent. Hyland and Hyland's (2001, 2006a) results indicated the teachers provided **a similar amount of positive and negative feedback**, but one teacher gave more suggestions than her colleague. Z. Wang (2011) reported 96% of teacher feedback on EA was **negative**, 11% of which were suggestions (classified by Wang as a type of negative feedback). Clements' (2008) case study teacher preferred to provide **positive** comments and became more positive with the passage of time; but he did not manage to provide suggestions other than pointing out the strengths/problems of his EFL students' writing. My study found that Teacher T used a similar amount of problems-indication feedback (negative comments), strengths-indication feedback (positive comments), explanations, advice/suggestions, and revisions when commenting on EA issues (each about 20%).

It seems the empirical evidence on L2 teachers' feedback delivery approaches does not paint a consistent picture. However, there appears to be similar thinking behind the way teachers provide non-error feedback. That is, all the teachers in the above-mentioned studies were aware of the interpersonal effects of feedback. In Z. Wang's study, the teacher comments were overwhelmingly negative (96%), but the teacher took student expectations, affect and motivation into consideration and mitigated her negative feedback most of the time (89% mitigated negative feedback). Clements' (2008) teacher participant's emphasis on the strengths of student writing also reflects his sense of the students' affective needs. In my study, Teacher T usually began her combination comments with positive-oriented feedback. The available studies about feedback delivery approaches, though yielding seemingly inconsistent findings, support Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) argument that teachers have awareness of the

affective aspect of feedback and they have a desire to construct a better teacher-student relationship and a more supportive teaching environment when writing comments.

As to the different results regarding L2 teachers' provision of suggestions, there may be two main reasons for the differences. First, teachers utilized different techniques to give feedback. In Z. Wang's study, the teacher used both written and oral feedback to respond to student writing. When giving oral feedback, she was found to move from pointing out problems to finding solutions together with her students. As such, we can assume that the teacher might save suggestions and explanation for her oral feedback and that is the reason why there were fewer suggestions reported. Furthermore, Hyland and Hyland (2001) pointed out the teachers' use of a feedback sheet caused a much higher number of suggestions to be provided by one of their teacher participants. Second, it might be closely related to teacher beliefs and teacher experience. For instance, in my study, Teacher T strongly believed that suggestions must be provided, otherwise teacher feedback cannot be considered effective. In Clements' study, the lack of suggestions could be explained by the teacher's limited experience in providing feedback.

### Teacher revision

My study found that *revision* was a type of feedback Teacher T provided rather frequently. T took the affective aspect of feedback into consideration when revising student writing as well. For instance, she usually used mitigation strategies and preceded her revisions with words like *"Here, a possible revision can be: ..."* to mitigate the imposition of her revisions. However, whether it is appropriate for teachers to provide students with a number of revisions is still an open question. This is because, when offering such guidance, the teacher is considered to be in danger of appropriating students' writing and becoming a critic rather than a coach (Sprinkle, 2004).

### Feedback in English/Chinese/both and use of emoticons

To my knowledge, so far, no feedback studies in the field of L2 writing have ever touched upon the language channel of feedback (e.g., feedback in Chinese/English/both) and teachers' use of emotions (e.g., ☺; ☹). According to

Forman (2008), in bilingual L2 classrooms the local teachers' use of the L1 can be seen as scaffolding to build knowledge. In my study, Teacher T also considered that commenting in Chinese or in both Chinese and English provided a scaffold for teachers' efforts to write feedback and students' efforts to attend to it. Considering my study found that the use of comments in Chinese and emoticons triggered different reactions from the students (e.g., Student A felt feedback language did not matter while Students B and C preferred feedback in Chinese), teachers' choice of language channel for EA feedback and use of emoticons warrant a thorough investigation.

*Combination feedback*

From the perspective of scaffolding degree, my study found Teacher T provided mainly combination feedback (about 65%), which usually began with something positive and consisted of feedback pointing out problems, feedback explaining problems, and feedback providing suggestions/solutions. Similarly, Hyland and Hyland (2001) reported teachers' provision of praise–criticism pairs, criticism–suggestion pairs, and "the praise–criticism–suggestion triad" (p. 196) as well. Min's (2013) study also reported her use of combination feedback that clarified the writers' intentions, identified writing problems, explained problems, and made specific suggestions. However, Hyland and Hyland's and Min's studies chiefly related the teachers' provision of combination feedback to the affective aspect of teacher feedback (e.g., for taking a more probing and collaborative reader stance), rather than to its pedagogic effect. In my study, according to Teacher T's report in the background interview, her combination comments allowed a higher degree of helpfulness. In light of these findings, L2 teachers would probably do better if they keep both the pedagogic and affective effects of their written feedback in mind when deciding how to deliver EA feedback.

*Cross-assignment and cross-student differences*

My study found that, across writing assignments, there was a constant increase of positive and hedged feedback and a decrease of explanations and direct feedback. A reasonable explanation of these changes is that they are a consequence of student improvement over time. In Ferris et al.'s (1997) study, one possible explanation the researchers provided for such cross-assignment differences was "student

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improvement and greater shared knowledge" (p. 172). According to Hyland (2007), genre teachers gradually reduce their direct explanations of genre issues, their guidance, and their control over time because, and with the passage of time, the students' competence and knowledge in the target genre grow and their confidence in genre writing increases. To a large extent, it seems that Teacher T's situation was such a case.

In my study, Teacher T provided a larger amount of EA feedback and more positive comments to Student B, whom she considered to have a relatively lower level of expertise in English writing and lower-level English proficiency. This result is inconsistent with Ferris et al.'s (1997) finding that "teachers take a more collegial, less directive stance when responding to stronger students, while focusing more on surface-level problems with weaker students" (p. 177). However, in their study, Ferris et al. also pointed out that how teachers deliver their feedback might also be influenced by students' interaction with the teacher. My finding shows that this claim of Ferris et al. could be true, because T felt she had a better relationship with B. That is to say, the teacher-student relationship might be one of the possible reasons T wrote more feedback on B's writing. As to the reason why T provided more positive feedback on B's writing, it can also be explained by her belief and her affective consideration that *"the weaker the student is, the more positive feedback is needed."*

### 7.1.3.2 Theoretical discussion

The above discussions reveal a striking factor that greatly influences teacher decisions about how to deliver EA feedback, that is, teachers' affective considerations. More importantly, they once again reveal a complex, dynamic picture of teacher written feedback. In other words, it is not possible to isolate the teacher's feedback delivery approaches from teacher factors (e.g., teacher belief, teacher experience; teachers' affective considerations), student factors (e.g., student improvement), the affect and effect of teacher feedback, and contextual factors (e.g., teacher-student relationship).

Moreover, my study shows that to better understand teacher written feedback, a systematic, fine-grained model for characterizing teachers' feedback delivery approaches is still needed. According to the Literature Review Chapter, there are currently two main traditions of feedback research. In the tradition of Ferris, the

teacher's feedback delivery approaches are usually categorized into statement, imperative, and question according to its pragmatic functions (e.g., Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Sugita, 2006); in the tradition of Hyland and Hyland, teacher written feedback is mainly grouped into praise, criticism, and suggestion (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a) according to its orientation. My study uses various perspectives (orientation, scaffolding degree, and language channel) to identify Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches. This follows Hyland and Hyland's tradition, but moves beyond it since more categories characterizing T's feedback delivery approaches emerged from my data (e.g., teacher revisions, feedback in Chinese). These various categories used in earlier studies and my study seem to indicate that we can broadly categorize feedback according to its internal (e.g., feedback orientation like positive/negative responses, pragmatic function of feedback) and external (e.g., the language used to provide feedback) qualities.

Generally, it seems that underlying Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches were principles of product-oriented teaching and genre teaching. On the one hand, the evidence that the bulk of T's EA feedback was evaluator-response comments (74%) reflects that it is very likely that T's instruction occurred in a product-oriented evaluative environment. This is because in the product-oriented environment, the teacher usually takes the stance of an evaluator and assumes the role of evaluating a single draft of students' assignments. On the other hand, T provided a large amount of combination comments (65%) to point out and analyze the students' EA problems/strengths and to provide the students with explanations, suggestions, and revisions. Her frequent use of combination comments implies that, when providing EA feedback, T seemed to emphasize the importance of supportive, explicit instruction and she applied the most typical principle of the genre-based pedagogical approach (that is, the teacher helps to scaffold the students' understanding of how to explain argumentatively and why it should be explained argumentatively in the ways it is.). In general, the findings about T's feedback delivery approaches suggest that an aggregation of pedagogies might be underlying her feedback practices. That is to say, she might apply a combination of genre- and product-oriented perspectives to their teaching. Of course, teachers' eclectic application of the genre approach is not criticized here; an eclectic combination of methods and activities may be necessary in some situations to maximize the learning opportunities.

**7.1.4 How the teacher's feedback delivery approaches were decided**

As to how Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches were determined, the following key findings emerged from teacher data:

- T's decisions were formed as the result of the interaction among her **cognitive** (e.g., interpreting student writing), **behavioural** (e.g., consulting online dictionary), and **affective** (e.g., affective response to student writing) **involvement** in feedback provision; and
- Some **teacher factors** (e.g., teacher belief) and **contextual factors** (e.g., sociocultural context, pedagogical context) influenced the formation of T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback.

Again, the following discussion of findings is in relation to prior empirical studies and theories (7.1.4.1 and 7.1.4.2). To my knowledge, the contribution of the interaction among teachers' cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement in feedback provision to their decision-making is still not available in literature. As such, Teacher T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement in feedback provision are discussed separately in the following sub-section.

**7.1.4.1 Empirically-based discussion: Teacher involvement and influencing factors**

*The teacher's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement*

To decide how to deliver EA feedback, my study found that Teacher T mainly made cognitive investment (70%), which included six types of operations: interpretation operations, evaluation operations, identification and selection operations, review operations, reflection operations, and planning and monitoring operations. As reported in Chapter 4, T often invested considerable time and effort into reading and interpreting student texts (interpretation operations, 20% of cognitive involvement), and then she could make up her mind to provide an evaluator-response comment (e.g., problems/strengths-oriented feedback). Sometimes, she was also found to be engaged in deep-level interpretation operations to identify the student's writing intention so that she could couple her problem-oriented feedback with some positive words. Considering T's investment of time and effort in interpretation operations was big, my findings reveal that, basically, the formation of teachers' decisions about how to deliver feedback is the result of their interaction with student texts. T's deep-level processing of student texts and the formation of her decisions to add positive feedback also show that, when responding to student writing and recognizing their writers' underlying intentions, teachers interact not only with student text, but also

with the student writers. In other words, Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) argument that teachers are aware of the affective aspect of teacher feedback is borne out in my findings about T's identification of the students' underlying intention and her intention to provide positive EA feedback.

When Teacher T was carrying out **evaluation operations** (21% of cognitive involvement), my study found she evaluated not only student writing, but also

- students' abilities,
- students' writing attitude,
- students' efforts devoted to the writing task,
- students' development as L2 writers,
- students' acceptance of and affective reactions to EA feedback,
- students' writing processes,
- students' application of classroom instruction to writing, and
- the differences and changes in students' writing (differences with former writing and cross-student differences).

The above findings once again show that, to decide how to respond to student writing, teachers interact not only with student writing, but also with its writer. In Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) words, when teachers write feedback on student writing, they tend to "conceptualize" students first. What they meant is that teachers usually target feedback to students' personality, needs, expectations, past experiences as writers and recipients of feedback, and possible response to teacher feedback, to name a few (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a).

When teachers interact with student writers to decide how to deliver feedback, it seems that they take various student factors into consideration. In Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) study, to decide how to deliver feedback, the teacher participants considered students' strengths and weaknesses, needs, personalities, and possible responses to teacher feedback. In Z. Wang's (2011) study, the teacher participant kept her students' expectations, affect, and motivation in mind and chose to deliver her EA feedback in a mitigated, indirect way. In my study, Teacher T evaluated students' abilities, students' writing attitude, and students' efforts devoted to the writing task, to name a few to choose her approaches to deliver EA feedback. It is inevitable that teachers may take different student factors in account during feedback because each teaching and learning context is unique. However, it can probably be said that, to decide how to deliver teacher feedback, teachers "interact" with students

who are feedback users (e.g., teacher consideration of student reaction to feedback), classroom participants (e.g., teacher consideration of student application of classroom instruction), writers (e.g., teacher consideration of students' writing process), and people who have emotions (e.g., teacher consideration of student affect).

My study also found that Teacher T carried out a variety of identification and selection operations (12% of cognitive involvement), which embraced:

- her attempts to identify the exact ideas she intended to convey in her feedback,
- her selection of a better way to convey her ideas and messages, and
- her selection of the most appropriate lexical items, language expressions, sentence structures, feedback language channels (Chinese or English), feedback sequence (e.g., positive feedback placed before negative feedback), and symbols (e.g., highlight or underline; use of liking/disliking face or not) to provide high-quality EA feedback.

These findings indicate how T carefully monitored her feedback practice so that she could accurately convey ideas about good writing to feedback recipients. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006a), how teachers deliver their feedback evokes images of themselves as teachers. My findings about the great efforts T made to write high-quality EA feedback indicate her wish to create a positive teacher image.

Teacher T also devoted considerable energy to **reviewing and reflecting on** the decisions she had made about how to deliver EA feedback (about 23% of cognitive involvement). As listed in Chapter 4, her cognitive review operations included

- re-reading and reviewing student writing,
- reading and evaluating her own feedback,
- re-evaluating student ability,
- comparing student writing and her own revision,
- comparing her revision with student writing, and
- considering student understanding/incorporation/application of EA feedback.

Her reflection operations were focused on

- student problems with dealing EA issues and the causes of student problems,
- student progress in argumentation and the causes of student progress,
- her own feedback purposes (for instruction),
- the effective feedback delivery approaches (e.g., confirmation of student strengths and progress),
- articulating (dis)satisfaction with her own work, and
- student affect, student acceptance of teacher feedback, and student application of classroom instruction concerning EA issues.

The implication arising from the above findings once again is that teacher decision-making is inherently interactional. This conclusion is drawn because Teacher T's review and reflection operations reflect her **re-interaction** with student texts (re-reading and reviewing student writing), and with students (as writers and feedback receivers). What is more, when reviewing and reflecting on her own feedback, T also "interacted" with herself as a feedback giver (by reading her own feedback), a critic (by evaluating her own feedback and comparing student writing and her own revision, etc.), an instructor in the classroom (by considering her own feedback purposes, etc.), and an emotional decision maker (by articulating (dis)satisfaction with her own feedback).

During feedback provision, one observable **action (behaviour)** Teacher T took was consulting online dictionaries/resources. When thinking aloud, she gave two reasons for these behaviours:

- an inadequate stock of vocabulary, and
- her expectations to write better comments so that she could convey and model ideas about good writing explicitly.

The two reasons T gave here suggest that teacher confidence plays an important role in her decisions to provide EA feedback. This is because the first reason T gave (lack of vocabulary) is related to her confidence in whether she could perform specific feedback tasks very well and the second reason (her high expectation to provide high-quality feedback) is related to her confidence in whether her EA feedback could more effectively impact students' performance. In this sense, the findings here imply that it is the inseparability and interplay of teacher actions and teacher affect/confidence that contribute to the formation of T's decisions about how to write EA feedback.

In Z. Wang's (2011) study, the teacher participant also pointed out her confidence influenced how she commented on student writing (e.g., her delivery of feedback in an inconsistent manner due to lack of confidence). Considering teacher confidence plays an important role in teachers' writing of feedback, it could be a useful focus for future research. Particularly, the issue of the confidence of EFL teachers who write feedback as non-native English speakers deserves more attention from researchers.

The percentage values of Teacher T's affective engagement (about 7% of cognitive involvement; including T's affective response to student writing, her emotional states aroused by responding to student texts, and her attitude towards her own comments) and her metacognitive operations (1.5% of cognitive engagement; e.g., T's regulation of her emotions) were low. However, the above discussion about the inseparability of behaviour and affect (e.g., teacher confidence) clearly shows that teacher affect is deeply interwoven with teacher behaviour. Moreover, as shown in Chapter 4, my study found that it is the cognition-behaviour-affect interaction that leads to the formation of teachers' feedback-delivery-approach decisions (See Section 4.6.2). Obviously, my study supports the following argument: cognition, affect, and behaviour are dynamically interconnected; they are bound together because cognition and emotions both influence human behaviours (Pessoa, 2008).

*Teacher factors: Teacher role, teacher image and teacher beliefs*
Concerning the influencing factors, one finding from my study was there was a link between the role Teacher T thought she adopted (as an instructor) and her decision-making about how to deliver EA feedback. She commented on her reason for delivering combination feedback was that she felt she was teaching in the classroom when commenting in that way. As such, my findings lent empirical support to Goldstein's (2005) claim that teacher role (one factor that the teacher brings to the feedback-and-response process) is a factor that may influence teachers' feedback practices.

My study also offered a report about the influence of teacher image on Teacher T's choice to provide hedged EA comments. T said in the interview that she felt afraid of "losing face" for responding inappropriately but directly. It is believed in Western society that people are less concerned about the face-saving/losing issues (Ting-Toomey & Kutogi, 1998) while people from collective societies (like Chinese people) are more concerned with loss of face (Waterman, 1984). From this perspective, T's decision to provide hedged feedback was indeed shaped by the interaction of creating a good teacher image and the contextual factor of society and culture.

My study identified both consistent and inconsistent relationships between Teacher T's beliefs and her feedback delivery approaches. On the one hand, T believed that she would provide positive, negative, advisory, and explanatory EA comments, and she believed in the usefulness of praise, combination comments, and comments provided in Chinese or in both Chinese and English. Consistent with her beliefs, Teacher T did provide these types of EA feedback in her actual practices. On the other hand, inconsistent with her feedback beliefs to offer EA feedback in a direct manner, Teacher T often provided *hedged EA comments*. Min's (2013) study revealed a stable belief-practice consistency concerning her own provision of problems-indication feedback, explanation/description feedback, and suggestions. According to Min, this stability can be explained by her awareness to "align her commentary practices with her articulated beliefs lest students should challenge her mismatched words and behaviour" (p. 635). If this were the case, one of the possible reasons why T's feedback delivery approaches were not always informed by her beliefs probably was that she lacked sufficient awareness to keep her beliefs and practice consistent. The other reason behind T's decisions to provide hedged EA feedback was the influence of the teacher-student relationship, which is discussed in the following.

### *Contextual factors*

Five layers of contextual factors were found to influence Teacher T's decision-making in general and her provision of "revision" on the concluding paragraph of student writing in particular. These factors were:

- the sociocultural context,
- pedagogical context (a decision shared by the teacher and the students),
- textual-level contexts (feedback acceptability and reliability),
- personal context (cognitive overload), and
- interpersonal context.

My findings about the influence of the sociocultural context, pedagogical context, and textual-level context on Teacher T do not seem to be surprising, since there have already been several previous studies reporting on it (e.g., Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2017; Junqueira & Payant, 2015; Z. Wang, 2011). What was unexpected was, in T's view, the tasks of commenting on **EA issues** and **thinking aloud** were rather cognitively demanding; and then due to the cognitive overload of these two tasks, she usually only provided very brief comments on the

concluding paragraph and often did not provide "revision" on it. To some extent, this finding highlights a limitation of my study. The teacher probably did not provide rich data concerning the concluding paragraph because of providing feedback on the difficulty EA issues and using the think-aloud method.

My study presented a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and Teacher T's decisions to provide hedged EA feedback and positive EA feedback. For example, T considered there was a high level of trust between herself and Student B, and felt their relationship was closest. Her explanation for one of her deliberate choices to give encouraging/positive EA comments on B's text was: *"Because it was her [Student B's] writing; I won't do it on others."* My finding about the influence of teacher-student relationships on her decision-making lends support to Lee and Schallert's (2008a, 2008b) result that a trusting and caring relationship influenced teacher feedback and student revision. It also once again mirrors Hyland and Hyland's (2006a) argument about teachers' consideration of the interactional and affective aspect of teacher written feedback when they provide feedback on student writing.

Also, my study reported there was some connection between **a teacher-student shared decision** and Teacher T's decision about commenting in English, Chinese or both. In class, T and her students had already achieved agreement early on that her EA feedback would be chiefly provided in their L1, Chinese, for the purposes of clarity and understandability. In actual practice, my study found that T provided an equivalent number of English (50%) and Chinese (50%) comments. This was because T felt worried that she could not create an ideal English-learning environment if she frequently used Chinese. These quantitative and qualitative results indicate that this teacher-student common decision only partially influences T's feedback decisions; it is indeed the interaction between the contextual factor (the teacher-student shared decision) and T's affect (anxiety) that determined her choice of language channels.

**7.1.4.2 Theoretical discussion: From the perspective of sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy**

*From the perspective of sociocognitive theory*

Discussions in the previous sub-sections (7.1.1-7.1.3) have repeatedly shown that the indivisibility of teacher factors, student factors, and contextual factors, that is, the

inseparability principle (one of the basic principles underlying sociocognitive theory), is reflected in my study. What is more, the discussions in Sub-section 7.1.4.1 show that the inseparability principle can also be found in the integration of and interaction between Teacher T's (meta)cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and behavioural engagement during feedback provision, which provides evidence to the sociocognitive perspective about how teachers provide feedback in "mindbodyworld" (i.e., the inseparability and interaction among mind/cognition, body/affect, body/behaviours, and world/contextual background).

It is true that Teacher T's feedback provision is predominately cognitive (70% of T's total engagement when providing feedback); however, my findings about the inseparability of T's cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement indicate that taking a **cognitive** perspective to look at teacher feedback is not enough. This viewpoint also parallels what Ellis (2010) and Han (2016) argued for in the field of written corrective feedback. They believed that leaving out the affective and behavioural dimensions of written corrective feedback would make a complete understanding of written corrective feedback impossible. They suggest that it is necessary to take a sociocognitive perspective, a perspective that integrates cognitive, behavioural, and affective dimensions, to define and research corrective feedback. Now, by bringing studies related to corrective feedback and my studies together, it can be said that taking a sociocognitive lens to view teacher written feedback (including both corrective feedback and non-error feedback) is justifiable.

In addition, in my study, there is clear evidence to illustrate the other two principles that underlie the sociocognitive approach to teacher written feedback: the adaptivity and alignment principles (i.e., the principles about teacher-student coordinated interaction during feedback, and the teacher/student coordinated interaction with the contexts during feedback; Atkinson, 2011, 2014). For example, when carrying out evaluation operations, Teacher T evaluated students' abilities, students' writing attitude, students' effort devoted to the writing task, students' development as L2 writers, students' acceptance of and affective reactions to EA feedback, students' writing process, students' application of classroom instruction to writing, and the differences and changes in students' writing (differences with former writing and cross-student differences). This example clearly shows that, to decide on how to

deliver feedback approaches, T based on her "conceptualization" of the students to adapt her EA feedback to student receptivity and to make effort to achieve teacher-student aligned thoughts and affect. As alignment was the central principle T was concerned with during feedback provision, the sociocognitive perspective on teacher written feedback is empirically supported.

### *From the perspective of genre pedagogy*

The sociocognitive perspective on teacher written feedback is revealing for the genre approach to writing instruction. According to Hyland (2007), L2 writing genre instructors play the role of planning, sequencing, supporting, and assessing learning in teaching practice. Enlightened by sociocognitive theory, we can also understand that, in the genre-based classroom, the teacher teaches in "mindbodyworld", and his/her goal is to achieve teacher-student alignment.

### 7.1.5 Summary of discussion of findings for RQ1

To summarize what has been discussed so far, the following issues have been revealed in this section: the complexity, the dynamic, and the interpersonal and interactional aspects of teacher written feedback, research gaps (e.g., teacher affect/confidence), and some methodological issues (e.g., limitation of my study). It is clear from the discussion of this section that teacher decisions about providing English or/and Chinese feedback on supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, and topic statement and topic sentence in the way of identifications, explanations, suggestions, revisions, and a combination thereof are formed through the workings of the teacher's "mindbodyworld" and her devotion to achieving teacher-student coordination and alignment.

### 7.2 Findings for RQ2: Empirical and theoretical discussion

For RQ2 (*When processing the teacher's EA feedback, how does the Chinese EFL student decide the extent to which it is accepted and incorporated?*), the findings reported in Chapter 5 are mainly related to:

- the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback, and
- how the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback was decided.

This section provides a discussion of these findings obtained from student data (background interview data, think-aloud data, retrospective interview data, and

students' written notes). It contains two sub-sections (7.2.1 and 7.2.2), both of which begin with a review of the findings and move on to an empirically-based and then a theoretically-based discussion of the findings. As to the theoretical discussion of findings, it is either guided by both sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy, or only by sociocognitive theory. Section 7.2 concludes with a summary of what has been discussed (7.2.3).

### 7.2.1 Students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback

**Review of findings**

Concerning Students A, B, and C's acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback, my study mainly reported the following findings:

a) **Student A: self-regulated, deep-level acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
My study found that A *understood*, *and agreed with* most of Teacher T's EA feedback on her first and second writing assignments, and she also *summarized* and *internalized* the genre/rhetorical knowledge contained in Teacher T's EA feedback on her first and second writing assignments (mainly through her self-initiated thoughts and actions such as searching for a model text online and analysing it critically). Moreover, after processing the teacher feedback, A took down notes which included her summary of the teacher feedback, her reflections on it, and her solutions about how to revise her writing.

b) **Student A: decreasing incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
A's incorporation of Teacher T's feedback on cohesion/coherence and supporting evidence gradually decreased after she processed Teacher T's feedback on her second writing assignment. This is because she felt that she had mastered the genre/rhetorical knowledge contained in Teacher T's EA feedback on her first and second writing assignments and Teacher T's EA feedback on her third writing assignment provided no new genre/rhetorical knowledge.

c) **Student B: slow, increasing acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
B could not understand Teacher T's EA feedback on her first writing assignment. She did not begin to understand, agree with, and incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback (especially EA feedback on supporting evidence) until she processed Teacher T's EA feedback on her second writing assignment.

d) **Student B: passive, superficial incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
B mainly memorized and marked the key points in Teacher T's EA feedback.

e) **Student C: other-regulated acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
C generally could understand and agree with Teacher T's EA feedback, but after processing Teacher T's feedback, she still had such questions regarding how to use the cause-and-effect technique, how to use evidence to support

topic sentences, and how to use some cohesion. That is to say, she still needed the teacher's or others' clarification about EA issues.

f) **Students B and C: misunderstanding/assumption-based acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (cognitively and behaviourally)**
B and C sometimes accepted Teacher T's feedback on micro-level coherence or supporting evidence without a clear understanding of Teacher T's intention. B sometimes accepted Teacher T's feedback on micro-level coherence as language feedback or she sometimes disagreed with Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence. C sometimes accepted Teacher T's feedback on micro-level coherence based on guessing Teacher T's intention.

g) **Students A, B, and C: shifting emotional acceptance of EA feedback (emotionally)**
When A processed teacher feedback, she changed from expressing appreciation for it to expressing dissatisfaction with it (because she felt she received no new information from Teacher T's EA feedback on her third writing assignment). B and C did not think they emotionally accepted Teacher T's feedback on their first writing assignment, but they thought they emotionally accepted Teacher T's feedback on their second and third writing assignments.

In the following sub-sections (7.2.1.1 and 7.2.1.2), the empirically-based discussion focuses on the cross-case/student variations and similarities and a specific case/student's (Student B) problems. The theoretical discussion is provided from the perspectives of sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy.

**7.2.1.1 An empirically-based, cross-case discussion of findings**

*Cross-case discussion: Students' variations*

Generally, the above-reviewed findings indicate that Students A, B, and C varied greatly in their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback. As such, my findings about these cross-student variations provide support to Hyland and Hyland's (2006b) caution that we should not lump students "as an undifferentiated group" (p. 11) when we seek to understand how teacher feedback is structured and interpreted.

In L2 teaching and learning literature, Chinese, as well as Asian, students are often labelled "as an undifferentiated group" and considered as passive, obedient learners. To a large extent, this is because in the traditional Eastern education culture the teacher is viewed as the authority figure (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 1998). My findings about these cross-student variations show that there may be great individual differences among Chinese EFL students and some students may diverge greatly from the image that the unrefined cultural stereotypes have imposed on them. As a simple example, Student A's self-regulated, deep-level acceptance and

incorporation of Teacher T's feedback shows that she brought agency to the feedback process and, instead of being a passive learner, she could take control of her own learning. Similarly, Kumar, Kumar, and Feryok's (2009) feedback study also provided a counter-example to the general image that Chinese students are mostly passive and accepting of whatever their teachers tell them.

However, Hyland and Hyland (2006a) did not deny the impact of historical and sociocultural influences on student learners. Of course, it is inevitable that Chinese students may inherit some traditional cultural attributes (e.g., Confucian teacher centeredness and authority; learning by rote and memorization) and the historical and sociocultural context (e.g., the examination culture of China) definitely shapes their learning. In my study, Student B's passive and superficial acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback (use of memorization) indicates that the traditional sociocultural background that Chinese EFL students are rooted in greatly influences their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback. Moreover, A and C sometimes incorporated EA feedback (e.g., feedback on cohesion) through memorization as well, which also reveals the influence of sociocultural context on students' reception of teacher feedback.

### Cross-case discussion: Students' changing cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation

According to the above-mentioned findings, Student A's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback decreased; Student B's cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation increased; and Student C's acceptance and incorporation appeared to be relatively stable. Similar to the case of Student A, Ene and Upton (2014) reported that students' use of teacher feedback on the development of ideas dropped within a two-semester time period. According to Ene and Upton, one of the reasons behind this drop was that students' writing abilities developed with the passage of time and then their uptake of all of such feedback became unnecessary. It seems that this reason can be used to explain Students A and B's decreasing and increasing cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback as well. After A internalized the genre/rhetorical knowledge from Teacher T's supporting evidence-related feedback and improved her writing ability, it is not surprising that she did not incorporate similar feedback any

more. As B's ability to understand Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence improved over time, it is natural that she began to accept and incorporate it.

The other reason Ene and Upton (2014) gave for the students' declining uptake of teacher feedback on the development of ideas was the increasing complexity of writing tasks in the second semester (more advanced writing stage). The researchers considered that the increased complexity made it harder for students to implement the feedback. In my study, the complexity of writing tasks did not change greatly from writing assignment to writing assignment (about practicing cause-and-effect, exemplification, and freely-chosen argumentation techniques respectively). This lack of change in the complexity of writing tasks can probably explain Student C's relative stability in her cognitive and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback. However, C particularly felt that she had problems with the technique of cause-and-effect, which implies that the writing assignment that aims at practising the technique of cause-and-effect could have been somewhat more difficult than the writing task about exemplification.

***Cross-case discussion: Students' shifting emotional acceptance and incorporation***
As indicated above, from the perspective of the emotional acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback, there are also variations across Students A, B, and C (A: from emotional acceptance to dissatisfaction; B and C: from emotional non-acceptance to acceptance). Clements' (2008) study similarly reported that his student participants either emotionally accepted teacher feedback or felt overwhelmed by and unsatisfied with it (e.g., too many comments; second-draft comments pointing out further problems). Mahfoodh (2017) also reported that students' emotional acceptance of teacher feedback varied from one student to another. In Mahfoodh's study, some students reported a higher level of emotional acceptance of teacher feedback.

***Cross-case discussion: Students B and C's common problems***
As shown in the above-reviewed findings, Students B and C encountered the following problems in relation to their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback: inability to understand and agree with teacher feedback (e.g., Student B), inaccurate understanding of teacher feedback (e.g., Student B), and uncertainty about their

understanding of the intention of the teacher (e.g., Student C). These findings show that, when processing EA feedback, students may encounter various understanding-related problems. If this were the case, there is a need for future research to raise attention to this understanding-related issue. In fact, there are two other reasons why this issue deserves attention. First, the available findings about students' understanding of teacher feedback are diverse. For instance, in Ferris's (1995) study, nearly 50% of participants emphasized that they never had any problems understanding teacher comments while Lee's (2008b) interviews showed only 11% of highly proficient students said they could understand teacher feedback. Furthermore, Nazif, Biswas, and Hilbig (2004) and Zacharias (2007) found that the students "sometimes" had difficulty in understanding teacher feedback or the intention of their teacher's feedback. Second, learners' understanding of feedback is an issue that is equally as important as learners' use of feedback (Zhao, 2010). According to Zhao, feedback that is used/copied but not understood does not necessarily support the development of learners' long-term writing proficiency.

***Single-case discussion: An empirically-based discussion of a specific case***
As mentioned above, sometimes Student B might have misunderstood Teacher T's feedback on micro-level (e.g., inter-sentential) coherence as language feedback (misunderstanding-based acceptance and incorporation). To a large extent, this result is understandable because T's feedback on micro-level coherence was often delivered in the form of revision and lacked further explanation. That is to say, when the changes T made via her revision greatly improved the sentence quality and no explanation was made about these changes, it would be easy for the student to interpret her revision as a type of language feedback. However, Student A (high-level student writer) did not seem to have the same problem; as such, it was probably the interaction of student ability (i.e., student factors), feedback delivery approaches (i.e., textual-level context such as revision, explanation, etc.), and feedback focus (i.e., textual-level context such as feedback on coherence) that led to Student B's problems with acceptance and incorporation of coherence feedback.

My study also found that B sometimes disagreed with Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence, and then she refused to accept and incorporate it. Similar teacher-student disagreement has been reported in previous studies. In Cohen's

(1991) study, when teacher feedback reminded the high performer to provide examples, the student argued that she purposely wrote concisely for fear that she was too repetitive. In Brice's (1995) study, the student responded to teacher feedback about the irrelevance of supporting evidence with the following disagreement and justification: he wrote the way he wrote for the purposes of meeting task requirements and his teacher's expectation that stories were used as explanations. To a large extent, as teacher feedback, especially teacher feedback on supporting evidence, may lead to such teacher-student disagreement, it seems that feedback providers need to have a better reading of student writing and try to provide comments from the perspective of students' writing intentions.

### 7.2.1.2 Theoretical discussion: From the perspectives of sociocognitive theory and genre pedagogy

*From the perspective of sociocognitive theory*

As explained in the Literature Review Chapter, the adaptivity and alignment principles are two basic principles underlying the sociocognitive theory of student learning and development. To borrow Atkinson's (2014) metaphor, the social interaction where learning opportunities lie is like a cooperative (not competitive) ping pong game, in which two or more partners coordinate or align their activities sensitively and continuously for their mutual benefit. In other words, during the feedback cycle (one type of social interaction), the teacher and the student, like the cooperative ping pong players, are aligning their thoughts, affect, and actions moment by moment so that student-teacher shared/aligned thoughts, affect, and actions are created, and teacher feedback can be successfully accepted, incorporated, and used by students. The cross-case discussion presented in Sub-section 7.2.1.1 indicates that Students A, B, and C's interpretation of teacher feedback was constantly "**changing**" and "**shifting**" (from cognitive, behavioural, and affective perspectives), which is clear evidence of adapting and aligning for learning during the social interaction (feedback).

As repeated in Section 7.1, findings from teacher data support the sociocognitive perspective on teacher written feedback, which conceptualizes it as a complex (the inseparable interaction of teacher factors, student factors, and contextual factors), dynamic system. The above discussion (Sub-section 7.2.1.1) about the influence of the interactive student factors and contextual factors on Student B's acceptance and

incorporation of teacher feedback once again shows the complexity of teacher written feedback. Moreover, the above-reviewed results in relation to the changes of Students A, B, and C's cognitive and emotional acceptance of teacher feedback once again depict the dynamics of teacher written feedback.

*From the perspective of genre pedagogy*

According to genre theorists (e.g., Hyland, 2007), genre pedagogy emphasizes student learning through teacher support/scaffolding. However, this pedagogy also points out that students need teacher scaffolding less and less as their competence in writing targeted genres and their confidence in writing grow. In my study, a good case in support of this position (about decreasing scaffolding) is that Student A processed Teacher T's EA feedback on her third writing assignment in a simple way. This is because she considered there were no new insights she could gain from Teacher T's EA feedback on her third writing assignment and she confidently felt that she had acquired the genre/rhetorical knowledge provided in Teacher T's previous comments. Hyland (2007) pointed out that ongoing diagnostic assessments are needed in the genre-oriented classroom since they can help teachers identify areas where learners need extra practice and allow teachers to target the areas that need additional teaching. My study shows that ongoing assessments are necessary because they can help teachers identify when to decrease or remove scaffolding/feedback.

## 7.2.2 How the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback were decided

As to how the students decided to accept and incorporate the various EA comments, my study found

- a) it was related to the depth of the students' cognitive processing of EA feedback,
- b) it was associated with the interaction among the students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with EA feedback, and
- c) it was mediated by a number of student and contextual factors.

The following three sub-sections (7.2.2.1-7.2.2.3) include an empirically-based and a theoretical (sociocognitive and genre perspectives) discussion of the above-mentioned findings.

## 7.2.2.1 Depth of cognitive processing
**Review of findings**

In my study, Students A, B, and C varied in the depth of their processing of Teacher T's EA feedback. My study related A's self-regulated, deep-level acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback to her deep-level processing of it. As to B's slow acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback, my study connected it to her superficial cognitive engagement with it. For C, her other-regulated acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback was linked to her processing feedback at a moderately deep level.

Regarding A's deep-level feedback-processing, my study reported the following findings. When she processed Teacher T's EA feedback, she

- read teacher comments and her own writing (**reading operations**),
- critically analysed her own writing problems (**processing operations**),
- thoroughly evaluated teacher feedback (**evaluation operations;** e.g., articulating (dis)agreement with Teacher T),
- made great effort to identify and summarize the focus, key points, and implications of Teacher T's EA feedback (**analysis operations**), and
- reviewed the useful information, key points, and messages implied in Teacher T's EA feedback (**review operations**).

B's superficial cognitive engagement with EA feedback mainly involved her **(re)reading and evaluation operations** (about 75% of cognitive engagement). This means that she usually just (re-)read teacher feedback, and responded to Teacher T's EA feedback chiefly by asking simple questions (e.g., *"why on earth is it problematic?"*), showing her disagreement with T (e.g., *"I don't think it is problematic."*), or interpreting T's EA feedback from the linguistic perspective (e.g., interpretation of coherence feedback as T's help to improve her language).

Similar to A, C made great efforts to understand why Teacher T provided EA feedback in the way she did, how T revised her writing, and what was behind T's EA comments (**evaluation and analysis operations**). However, as she often ended her feedback interpretation with questions like "[if what I wrote were problematic], then what should I do?" and employed operations to justify her writing (**justifying operations**), she usually processed T's EA feedback at a moderately deep level.

**Empirically-based discussion: Limited studies, similar findings**

To my knowledge, apart from Brice's (1995), Kumar's (2012), Kumar and Kumar's (2009), and Kumar, Kumar, and Feryok's (2009) studies, there seems to be no other

work that related the students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback to the depth of their cognitive operations. In Brice's study, the researcher reported two cases similar to Students A and C. One of them, like Student A, processed his teacher's feedback deeply by **describing the teacher comments**, **explaining his understanding of those comments**, and **responding to teacher comments** and he had little trouble understanding his teacher's feedback on content and organization. The other student could not understand his teacher's feedback on supporting evidence, and this was probably because he just spent time and energy explaining why she wrote the way she wrote but did not analyse the teacher feedback.

Kumar and her colleagues' studies reported similar findings, which also revealed the depth of students' cognitive engagement is closely related to students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback. In these studies, the researchers reported that their student participants' acceptance and incorporation (i.e., using teacher feedback to make revision) of teacher feedback resulted from their interpretation and evaluation of teacher feedback, their consideration of and reflection on the issues that were highlighted in teacher feedback, and their justification and explanation of their own work. In Kumar and Kumar's (2009) opinion, the effort the student spent on justifying and explaining her own work deepened her thinking about teacher feedback and pushed her to accept and incorporate teacher feedback.

Although studies that are now available reported similarly results, empirical evidence is obviously lacking. In fact, research into students' actual thought processes as they attend to teacher feedback is still limited (Kumar, 2012; Kumar & Kumar, 2009; Kumar, Kumar & Feryok, 2009). As such, there is a need for future research to continue to describe and elucidate such thought processes. Teachers need to understand them so that they can help students learn to process teacher feedback at a deep level and accept and incorporate teacher feedback more easily.

**Theoretical discussion: From the sociocognitive perspective**
According to the adaptivity principles of sociocognitive theory (one of the three basic principles underlying the theory), animals evolve nervous systems to "enable them to adapt to, function in, and coexist with the ecosocial environments" (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015, p. 39). That is to say, humans' learning (i.e., nervous/cognitive

evolvement) is largely a process of better adapting to the contexts and humans'
learning is adaptive (Atkinson, 2010b). In this sense, human beings who can better
adapt themselves to the context probably learn faster. In my study, Student A
evaluated, analysed, and reviewed Teacher T's EA feedback and her writing
problems, and she processed T's EA feedback at a deep level. In other words, Student
A was able to well adapt herself to the textual-level context (i.e., Teacher T's EA
feedback), which naturally brought about her quicker and better acceptance and
incorporation of EA feedback.

**Theoretical discussion: From the perspective of genre pedagogy**
According to Hyland (2007), genre teachers need to prepare opportunities for
students to **engage in, explore, explain, extend, and evaluate their learning** (See
the Literature Review Chapter for this point). In my study, when dealing with EA
feedback, only Student A could carry out these explanation, exploration, extension,
and evaluation operations and then decided on her acceptance and incorporation of
EA feedback. As shown above, when processing Teacher T's EA feedback, A made
great effort to identify and summarize the focus, key points, and implications of
Teacher T's EA feedback (analysing operations). That is to say, when interacting
with teacher feedback, A could **explain** teacher feedback in her own words (e.g.,
summarizing teacher feedback) and **explore** in great depth the things behind teacher
feedback (e.g., identifying the implications of teacher feedback). Furthermore, when
she found that she still had questions about how to use evidence to support topic
sentences, she adaptively **extended** the range of her learning opportunities to
critically read, evaluate, and analyse a model text she found online. In addition, when
processing Teacher T's EA feedback, Student A also critically analysed her own
writing problems (analysing operations) and kept **evaluating** her own work. Then,
due to her **deep-level cognitive engagement** with Teacher T's EA feedback, it is
doubtless that she could effectively understand it and fully accept and incorporate it.

Student C, like A, could explain the focus and key points of Teacher T's EA
feedback, and explore the implications. However, as she usually did not go further to
find answers to her questions about teacher feedback, her engagement with teacher
feedback did not involve **sufficient exploration and extension operations**. So, it is
not surprising that C could not accept and incorporate teacher feedback on supporting

evidence as fully as A did. Student B's superficial-level processing of Teacher T's EA feedback involved her merely reading T's EA feedback and her own work (reading operations) and her simple evaluation of Teacher T's EA feedback (evaluating operations). That is to say, her engagement with teacher feedback barely involved higher-level thinking operations such as explanation, exploration, extension, and evaluation of teacher feedback. As such, Student B could not understand Teacher T's EA feedback very well, let alone accept it immediately.

**7.2.2.2 Interaction among the students' cognitive, affective and behavioral engagement with EA feedback**

My study also found Students A, B, and C's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback was closely related to the interaction among their cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with it. So far, there is a limited amount of empirical work on the inseparability of students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with corrective feedback and its contribution to students' use of corrective feedback (e.g., Han, 2016). As far as non-error feedback is concerned, Brice (1995), Kumar (2012), Kumar and Kumar (2009) and Kumar, Kumar, and Feryok (2009) only related students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback to their cognitive engagement with it.

Due to this finding of my study (about the interaction and inseparability of the students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement and the occurrence of student learning and development in this interaction and inseparability), my study again provides evidence of the inseparability principle that underlies the sociocognitive perspective on teacher written feedback. In Atkinson's (2014) words, student learning/development takes place in the inseparable "mindbodyworld".

According to Hyland (2007), a genre-based writing course usually begins with doing needs analysis and seeking information about learners' current proficiencies, perceptions, and ambitions. Considering the occurrence of learning in the inseparability of student cognition, affect and behavior, it is probably also necessary for genre teachers to understand students' emotional needs and consider how to best serve their emotional needs before the course unfolds.

**7.2.2.3 The influence of student and contextual factors**

**Review of findings**

In my study, two groups of student-related factors were found to be important in the students' decisions to accept or reject Teacher T's EA feedback:

- **what students bring to the feedback process** (i.e., feedback beliefs, self-efficacy belief, knowledge and ability, expectations, and motivation), and
- **what students take into consideration when they process feedback** (teachers' understanding of their writing, and teachers' efforts and attitudes towards feedback provision).

In addition to these student factors, my study also laid out different layers of context that influenced Students A, B, and C's decisions to accept or not accept Teacher T's EA feedback. These influencing contextual factors included

- textual-level context (teacher feedback),
- writing context (when and where writing takes place), and
- interpersonal context (teacher-student relationship).

Following the organization of the above sub-sections, the forthcoming discussion includes an empirically-based and a theoretically-based discussion of findings. The empirically-based discussion begins with a general analysis of the student-related factors and then moves to a specific analysis of the different student factors. The theoretical discussion of these influencing factors is provided in relation to the sociocognitive theory of teacher written feedback.

**Student factors: Empirically-based discussion**

*A general analysis of student factors*

As indicated above, a range of influential student-related factors were identified in my study, which included student beliefs, student knowledge and ability, and student motivation, among others. Generally, most of these influential student factors identified in my study are related to learners' will (e.g., motivation) and capacity (ability) to act. As Gao (2010) defined learners' will and capacity to act as learner agency, my findings about these factors can be considered as factors related to learner agency.

*Specific student factors: Students' beliefs about writing and teacher feedback*

In my study, students' beliefs were found to correlate with students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback sometimes. Clements' (2008), Mahfoodh's (2017) and Simpson's (2006) studies also showed the influence of student beliefs on their

acceptance of teacher feedback. For instance, in Mahfoodh's study, the majority of the students emotionally accepted teacher feedback because they believed that it was useful for developing their writing skills and improving their written texts.

*Specific student factors: Students' self-efficacy belief*
My study found, due to their self-efficacy belief (i.e., self-confidence in their own writing), Student B did not accept Teacher T's EA feedback on her first assignment and Student A no longer made an effort to incorporate T's EA feedback on her third writing assignment (for feeling confident that she had mastered the genre/rhetorical knowledge contained in Teacher T's EA feedback on her first and second writing). In the ESL and EFL contexts, Hyland (1998) and Yang (2013) reported similar cases. The students chose not to accept teacher feedback (feedback in general or feedback on the opening paragraph) when they felt confident in what they had written. This common finding is not surprising since students' self-efficacy beliefs can predict their use of strategies when they undertake learning tasks (Metallidou & Viachou, 2007; Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006). Largely, it is predictable that A did not incorporate teacher feedback any more when she felt confident in what she wrote.

*Specific student factors: Students' prior writing knowledge and writing ability*
As reported in Chapter 5, Students B and C rejected or partly rejected Teacher T's feedback on the conclusion because they felt they relied on what they had acquired in high school when writing the conclusion and they did not know how to create a better concluding paragraph. As to the Chinese EFL students' writing-related knowledge and ability acquired in high school, it is necessary to understand it in a contextualized manner. In the retrospective interviews, Students B and C both said their prior knowledge about the writing of a conclusion was a technique to gain high scores in the National Tertiary Matriculation Examination. In this sense, Students B and C's non- or semi-acceptance of T's conclusion feedback was the result of the interaction between sociocultural background (i.e., the traditional examination culture in China) and the students' prior knowledge and ability to write the concluding paragraph. Moreover, as indicated in Chapter 4 (findings on RQ1), Teacher T believed that her feedback on the concluding paragraphs of student writing (textual-level context) was comparatively simple and not very helpful. So, to be more exact, it is the interplay of the sociocultural background, the textual-level context (i.e., teacher feedback on the

conclusion), and students' insufficient knowledge and ability that led to Students B and C's non- or semi-acceptance of teacher feedback on conclusion. About this emphasis on the interplay of context and student factors, Goldstein (2006) has already claimed that the interaction of context- and student-related factors may greatly influence how students attend to feedback.

*Specific student factors: Students' expectations for certain feedback delivery approaches*

The correspondence, or lack thereof, between Teacher T's EA feedback and Students A, B, and C's expectations also had an influence on the students' acceptance of teacher feedback. Similarly, Hyland (1998) reported the impact of ESL students' feedback expectations on their receptivity of teacher feedback. When the participant felt her teacher's feedback was "very bad [negative]", she chose to "stop for a while and keep it and take it out and look at again later" (p. 268). It seems that, when there is a mismatch between students' expectations and teacher feedback, students' reactions to teacher feedback may be very strong, and they may give up trying to incorporate teacher feedback.

*Specific student factors: Student motivation for learning to write and learning language*

In my study, the decisions Student A made about accepting and incorporating teacher feedback were built upon her motivation to deal with teacher feedback. In general, my study provides support to Goldstein's (2006) claim that motivation is particularly important in understanding how students might use their teachers' commentary. According to Goldstein, feedback foci (e.g., sentence-focused feedback), pedagogy (e.g., what to write about; the genres of writing tasks), student difficulty, and study demands/loads can all be demotivating, and the interaction of these context- and student-related factors may greatly influence how students attend to feedback.

*Specific student factors: Students' considerations*

In addition to what students bring to the feedback process, the students also took the following factors into consideration before deciding to accept teacher feedback:

- teachers' (mis)understanding of their writing, and
- teachers' efforts and attitudes about feedback provision.

In my study, Students A and B sometimes did not fully accept Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence when they felt that T had either misunderstood their writing or T's comments contradicted their own ideas (Student B). This finding is in line with Mahfoodh's (2017) and Zacharias' (2007) studies. Mahfoodh reported that the students rejected teacher feedback because they felt that their teachers did not understand what they intended to convey in their written texts. Zacharias found that the contradiction between teacher feedback and student ideas caused the students to have difficulty in understanding teacher feedback.

In my study, there were also instances where Student A fully accepted Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence because she felt that Teacher T read her writing in detail and undertook her work seriously. Yang (2013) reported that her participant felt guilty for not carefully attending to her teacher's detailed feedback. These findings indicate that sometimes students' acceptance of teacher feedback may be determined not only by their interaction with the teacher feedback, but also by their "interaction" with the feedback provider.

**Contextual factors: Empirically-based discussion**
My study found that the students' acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback were affected by a cluster of textual-level, feedback-related factors. It included feedback clarity, feedback content, feedback delivery approaches, feedback intensity, feedback location, and feedback suitability to student needs. It is natural that clarity of feedback influenced the students' interpretation of teacher feedback since it is generally considered that "unclear comments will derail an effective response" (Andrade & Evans, 2013, p. 8). In my study, when Student C felt that she was not clear about what the pronouns Teacher T used in her comments referred to, she just read teacher feedback and passed it over.

According to the students, the content of feedback was a very important factor that impacted their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback as well. In my study, it seems that Student A was particularly influenced by whether there was/were new knowledge/insights/writing criteria (e.g., the criteria of a good topic sentence) she could gain from Teacher T's EA feedback. She felt dissatisfied with the teacher feedback on her third writing assignment when she found that it brought her nothing

new. It is understandable that feedback content influenced how the students processed teacher feedback. This is because, teacher written feedback, as a kind of scaffolding, could only be helpful and acceptable when there is new information in it to point out the gap between students' work and the standard work and to help the students bridge the gap.

In addition, my study found how EA feedback is delivered is another important influencing factor. Students A, B and C's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback were influenced by whether there were explanations, models/revisions, and hedges in teacher feedback. Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) study and Treglia's (2009) study revealed that it was not the feedback delivery approach but the problem a teacher's comment focused on that determined students' use of teacher feedback. Considering students' acceptance and incorporation may be greatly influenced by how teacher feedback is delivered, to what extent feedback delivery approaches influence the students remains a topic for future research.

In my study, feedback intensity was also found to be an important influencing factor. Students A, B, and C used it to judge which EA issue Teacher T treated more seriously, and then, based on teacher attitudes, to decide whether to accept it or not. In my study, they all tried to incorporate T's feedback on supporting evidence and coherence because they felt that T devoted most of her effort to these issues and they frequently encountered feedback on these issues. This finding also shows that it is hard to single out the feedback itself as the main influencing factor. The influencing factors are often the intertwined feedback and teacher factors. In addition, it is often believed that repeatedly providing a large amount of one type of feedback may overwhelm the students (Ferris, 2003). My study shows that, concerning the complicated EA issues like supporting evidence and coherence, repetition and a larger amount might be necessary.

In my study, Student B's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's feedback on her first writing assignment was found to be influenced by the location of the teacher feedback. With regards to the influence of feedback location, Ardnt (1992) found that the students preferred feedback placed inside their texts and feedback close to the writing problems, while the teachers favoured using separate sheets for feedback. By

implication, according to Ardnt, the mismatch between student preference and teacher practice may influence students' interpretation of teacher feedback. In my study, Student B's acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback was influenced by the location of Teacher T's **in-text feedback**. Considering B only mentioned the influence of feedback location in the retrospective interview for her first writing assignment, the location of feedback might not be the single factor that affected her assimilation of teacher feedback. As teacher feedback on her first writing assignment overwhelmed B, it is understandable that sometimes she could not link teacher comments and her problems.

**Influencing factors: Theoretical discussion from the perspective of sociocognitive theory**

As mentioned several times, sociocognitive theory emphasizes that learning takes place in the mutually-adapted, coordinated interaction between human beings and between human beings and contexts (the adaptivity and alignment principles). The above discussion about the influence of "*Students' prior writing knowledge and writing ability*" provides a good example of the coordinated interaction between the student and the contexts (at the textual level and sociocultural level) and the consequence of this interaction (Students B and C's non-acceptance of teacher feedback on conclusion). The following is an analysis of this example from the sociocognitive perspective to indicate how learning can or cannot take place.

In that example, three factors that influenced Students B and C's acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback emerged simultaneously and interactively: the examination culture in China (sociocultural context), teacher feedback on the concluding paragraph (textual-level context), and the students' prior knowledge and ability (student factor). In my study, all these three factors prevented the students from accepting and incorporating EA feedback. First, the textual-level context Teacher T provided on the students' three writing assignments was not all sophisticated (i.e., simple teacher feedback on the concluding paragraph), which means that it did not adapt to student needs and it failed to provide good opportunities for the students to accept and incorporate EA feedback (or to learn). At the same time, the students' knowledge and ability regarding how to write a conclusion, shaped by the traditional Chinese examination culture, remained

unchanged. This also hindered them from fully engaging with the teacher feedback. Apparently, when the sociocultural and textual contexts did not provide good learning opportunities and students' insufficient knowledge and ability (shaped by sociocultural background) prevented them from adapting themselves to the learning contexts, their acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback (or learning) inevitably could not take place.

It is generally believed that students bring agency to the feedback process (or learning process). That is to say, if Students B and C exercised agency and made an effort to create coordination with the context, it was still possible that they could accept and incorporate teacher feedback. There is one possible reason why Students B and C failed to exercise agency and could not accept teacher feedback. That is, between the students and Teacher T, "a common understanding of the nature, procedures, and goals of the activity in which they are engaged" (i.e., "common ground", Batstone, 2010, p. 7) is significantly lacking. This assumption is made because when Student B began to develop some familiarity with Teacher T's feedback and gained some awareness of her problems with argumentation, she began to accept and incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback. In other words, when the common ground between Teacher T and Student B started to expand, Student B's acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback emerged. In this sense, in the example discussed above, the significant lack of teacher-student common ground deprived Students B and C of opportunities to exercise agency, so it was impossible for them to accept and incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback on the concluding paragraph of their writing easily.

### 7.2.3 Summary of discussion of findings for RQ2

In this section, findings on RQ2 were mainly discussed empirically and theoretically. The empirically-based discussion of findings highlights at least four points. First, sociocultural background may shape students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback, but students should not be labelled "as an undifferentiated group". Second, students' understanding of teacher feedback remains unclear. Third, it is not a single factor but the interaction between student factors and contextual factors that lead to the formation of students' decisions as to what feedback to accept and incorporate. Fourth, research into students' actual thought processes as they attend to teacher feedback is still limited.

As to the theoretical discussion of findings, the following points can be made. First, the above discussion shows that my findings for RQ2, like my findings for RQ1, support taking a sociocognitive perspective to conceptualize teacher written feedback. Additionally, using the alignment, adaptivity, and inseparability principles of the sociocognitive theory, how and why students accept and incorporate teacher feedback (i.e., how students learn genre/rhetorical knowledge) successfully or unsuccessfully can be explained. Second, a discussion of the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback from the perspective of genre pedagogy reveals what genre teachers need to do at the beginning of and during the course (e.g., analysis of emotional needs, ongoing assessment of student learning) and how students acquire genre/rhetorical knowledge via EA feedback (engagement, explanation, exploration, extension, and evaluation).

## 7.3. Findings for RQ3: A discussion based on empirical evidence

As explained in the Methodology Chapter, to answer RQ3 (*According to the student and the teacher, to what extent does the teacher-student interaction through EA feedback help the students improve, if the interaction is considered effective?*), interviews with the students and Teacher T were conducted. Interview data led to findings regarding:

- effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback;
- student changes as feedback receivers after feedback sessions; and
- helpfulness of teacher feedback on various EA issues and positive/negative EA feedback.

This section is dedicated to discussing these assessments from an empirical perspective. It begins with a discussion of the effectiveness of teacher-student interactions via EA feedback (7.3.1) and then moves to the discussion of the helpfulness of the feedback interaction for the students as feedback receivers (7.3.2). After that, the participants' assessments of various EA feedback are discussed (7.3.3). This section concludes with a summary of the preceding discussions (7.3.4).

### 7.3.1 Effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback

When commenting in a general sense on the effectiveness of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback, Teacher T and the students all said that it was effective and the students became better writers because of it. In previous studies, researchers

have found evidence of L2 students' positive views regarding the helpfulness of teacher feedback for student growth as writers (e.g., Clements, 2008; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Li, 2016; Seker & Dincer, 2014; Yang, 2013). These studies indicated that ESL and EFL university students generally felt that their teachers' feedback on all aspects of their texts helped them progress as writers. Largely, these previous studies and my study verify Ferris' (2003), Ferris and Hedgcock's (2014), and Hyland and Hyland's (2006b) assertion that students feel teacher feedback is valuable to them and it can help them improve their writing.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, in Teacher T's view, Student B had a relatively lower level of expertise in English writing and lower-level English proficiency. In Chapter 6 (Sub-section 6.1.2), Teacher T reported that her EA feedback was particularly useful for B's development and she felt B devoted considerable effort to applying teacher feedback to her new writing. This finding from my study aligns with Li (2016), which also showed the teacher related the helpfulness of the teacher feedback to the effort students devoted to it. Both studies seem to suggest that, from the teachers' perspective, teacher feedback is only helpful to student writers if they actively engage with it (Ferris, 2003).

In my study, although the teacher and the students shared the opinion that the teacher-student interactions via EA feedback were effective, the students all reported that some communication problems occurred during the feedback interactions. Student A felt that sometimes she was misunderstood by Teacher T; B and C felt that they could not understand what Teacher T was communicating or they could not communicate very well with Teacher T (especially when they dealt with teacher feedback on their first writing assignment). It seems that my findings support Hyland's (1998) argument that "the feedback situation has great potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding" (p. 255). They are also consistent with Clements' (2008) result that the students felt teacher comments were helpful for them, but sometimes the feedback-revision process was not "a smooth one" (p. 207).

### 7.3.2 Student changes as feedback receivers

The students in my study also felt they had become better feedback receivers after all the feedback sessions in the semester. Students A and C reported that they could quickly identify teacher intent in EA feedback. Student B said she could better deal

with teacher feedback. B and C also reported that they had started to develop more accepting and less defensive attitudes toward teacher feedback. These reports suggest that the feedback interactions facilitated the development of the students' cognitive abilities and the students seemed to be able to deal with EA feedback more rationally. Considering critical thinking skills are part of cognitive repertoires and students need to exercise critical thinking skills to judge and determine whether to accept, disregard, or reject EA feedback, the three students' development of their cognitive abilities shows that there was an improvement in their critical thinking skills because of receiving teacher feedback. In this sense, the evidence from my study sheds some light on the question Ferris (2001, 2003) has repeatedly raised in her publications: "Can teacher feedback foster the development of critical thinking skills without any tangible evidence of this development on student revisions?".

In contrast to the above-discussed positive findings, Student B did not think she had more strategies to attend to teacher feedback at the end of my study. Considering the students were not afforded ample opportunities to attempt strategies to deal with teacher feedback (Teacher T did not require revision or rewriting and the students as study participants were only asked to cognitively process teacher feedback), it is natural the students felt their feedback-handling strategies were still limited after several feedback sessions. In any event, my study indicates that Cohen's (1987) suggestion that students need training about strategies to handle teacher feedback is reasonable. However, whether feedback-handling strategies need to be provided in teacher feedback is still a question without clear answers (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999).

### 7.3.3 Helpfulness of teacher feedback on various EA issues and positive/negative feedback

As to the helpfulness of various EA feedback, my study found that the participants' views showed both similarities and differences. The following is a discussion of these similar and different views.

*Similar views: Limited helpfulness of teacher feedback on the concluding paragraph*

My study found that Teacher T and the three students all felt the teacher feedback on the concluding paragraph was not very effective and the students made limited

progress after processing it. There is nothing surprising in this result. This is because there was an obvious match between Teacher T's admission that her conclusion feedback had flaws (negative feedback pointing out only problems and lacking clarity, suggestions, or models) and the reasons the students gave for why they considered the conclusion feedback to be ineffective (only pointing out problems and lacking further information). Because writing the closing of a text is very important (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) and B and C stated they did not know how to write a conclusion, L2 writing teachers probably need to carefully consider how to help students solve this problem and how to better provide conclusion-related feedback.

*Similar views: Helpfulness of teacher feedback on supporting evidence*
In my study, all the students reported that Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence was very helpful for them to learn how to argue logically and coherently. This finding is in contrast to previous studies that seem to have only yielded negative results. They reported that ESL students had difficulty using argumentation-related feedback to make revisions since the revision task was cognitively demanding and it involved challenging work such as further analysis, explanation, or explicitness (e.g., Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Treglia, 2009; Song, Hoon & Alvin; 2017). However, the specific context of the current study could have led to the differing results. As reported in the Literature Review Chapter, Chinese EFL writers are generally considered to have difficulties dealing with the issue of argumentation as the result of English-Chinese differences in rhetoric. For example, it is often considered that the Chinese rhetorical convention does not use facts, examples, or details to support a point. As such, because of the difficulty of the issue, it is not surprising that Students A, B, and C all felt that teacher feedback on supporting evidence helped them move toward greater self-regulation. Moreover, according to the students' reports, teacher feedback on supporting evidence was helpful because they felt that Teacher T devoted most of her effort to these issues and repeatedly provided feedback on supporting evidence.

*Different views: Helpfulness of teacher feedback on topic statements and topic sentences*

In my study, Students A, B, and C acknowledged the helpfulness of teacher feedback on improving topic statements and topic sentences. In this sense, my finding is

consistent with that of Song, Hoon, and Alvin (2017), which showed that teacher feedback on thesis statements and topic sentences was useful for making revisions. However, in my study, A said it only helped her improve a little while Students B and C felt they learnt a lot from it (mainly because of its actionability). As to the inconsistencies of opinions, it can be explained from the perspective of student ability. In the interview, A said she had already had the ability to deal with topic statements and topic sentences before the feedback session. As there was little room for teacher feedback to offer help, it is not surprising that she perceived teacher feedback on topic statements and topic sentences to be less helpful.

In my study, Student A, B, and C reported that, with the help of teacher feedback, they mastered the skills to deal with topic statements and topic sentences. There is one possible reason for the students' optimism and self-confidence. That is, the students might equate the acquisition of knowledge with the acquisition of the ability to apply new knowledge to new writing. In my study, we can see that the students' rhetorical/genre knowledge about dealing with topic statements, topic sentences, cohesion, coherence, and argument construction was consolidated as the result of their interaction with the EA feedback. In the final interviews, all the students could describe certain basic criteria for a good introduction, effective topic sentences, appropriate use of connective words, and well-argued support. However, possessing the above-mentioned rhetorical/genre knowledge and criteria and being able to appropriately use them are not the same thing. The students' difficulty in applying what they have known can be understood through what W. Wang (2011) discussed in her paper:

> When I explain to them [Chinese EFL student writers] why they should clearly state thesis in the introduction and give a topic sentence for each paragraph in the main body [in class], they nod their heads agreeably. But when they write for another assignment, the same problem reoccurs: there is simply no thesis statement or topic sentence, or they produce the so-called "forced or false" thesis statement or topic sentence... (p. 301)

The above long quote indicates that perhaps it is still difficult to determine if Students A, B, and C's optimism can be actually translated into future writing.

***Different views: Helpfulness of teacher feedback on cohesion***

In my study, Students A and B were confident in their ability to deal with English conjunctions and they considered that teacher feedback on connectives (a type of cohesion feedback) led to no great changes for them, while Student C and Teacher T took the opposite position. Generally speaking, C's views were quite revealing. In the interview, C said, when writing a longer piece of writing where there were several body paragraphs to be structured, she could not use "firstly, secondly, and thirdly" in each paragraph and she had no idea how to solve such a problem. C's problem with connectives indicates that students' use of connectives involves not only their local decisions (e.g., choice of a connective word) but also their global concerns such as how to avoid repeatedly using "firstly, secondly, and thirdly" to develop arguments in different paragraphs. That is to say, when providing connective feedback, teachers need to take the students' various concerns into consideration and help students develop strategies to address these concerns when they write.

Moreover, in C's view, Teacher T's connective feedback was very useful because it helped her realize that direct transfer of Chinese conjunctions into English might lead to the incoherence of texts. If this is true, the possible reason Students A and B viewed Teacher T's conjunction feedback to be less helpful might be that they had not yet come to the realisation C had. That is to say, the reason A and B perceived connective feedback to not be very helpful might be that their insight into the use of English connectives was not deep. In fact, in the interview, A reiterated that it was not the surface-level conjunctions but coherence at the idea level that was important. This suggests that A might have no idea that English written texts are characterized by surface-level connectives (Silva, 1993) and direct transfer of meanings from Chinese to English without using connectives is very likely to be problematic.

### *Different views: Helpfulness of teacher feedback on coherence*
In my study, all participants felt Teacher T's feedback on coherence at different levels (e.g., intra-sentential coherence, overall coherence, etc.) was helpful. Considering that the students all acknowledged the helpfulness of coherence feedback, the findings of my study seem to align with Li's (2016) results, which similarly indicated the Chinese EFL students acknowledged the usefulness of teacher feedback on coherence. Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) study also demonstrated that ESL students could successfully use coherence feedback to make revisions.

However, in my study, Student A reported that coherence feedback greatly helped her understand how to organize sentences and texts into a logical and coherent order while Students B and C and Teacher T felt the students' improvement was insignificant. One possible explanation for the inconsistency of views may lie in that the students made their evaluation from different perspectives: Student A felt coherence feedback was very helpful because it conveyed useful insights to her about how to create logical, coherent texts while B and C felt that it was difficult to act on the feedback on coherence.

In my study, C often took feedback actionability into consideration when she was asked to make evaluations. She felt Teacher T's coherence feedback was not that useful because it often merely pointed out problems and she could not act on it. On the other hand, she believed that Teacher T's feedback on topic sentences was quite helpful because of its actionability. It is not a surprise that the students' evaluation is based on feedback actionability. This is because it is generally believed that effective feedback possesses this quality (Noursi, 2015).

### Different views on the helpfulness of positive feedback and direct, negative feedback

In my study, as to the helpfulness of positive feedback and direct, negative feedback, mixed results were obtained. On the one hand, Students A and B did not deny the helpfulness of positive feedback; on the other hand, they both acknowledged the helpfulness of direct, negative feedback. Furthermore, in her final interview, Student C also firmly expressed her belief in the helpfulness of direct, negative feedback; however, she reported that hedged, positive feedback did not work in the long run. Generally, as A, B, and C all found that direct, negative feedback was very helpful (A and C) or helpful (B), it seems that my study does not support the studies that found hedged feedback had little effect on students' use of teacher feedback (e.g., Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Sugita, 2006; Treglia, 2009). Meanwhile, as A, B, and C expressed mixed opinions about the helpfulness of positive feedback, it is hard to generalize the results.

### 7.3.4 Summary of discussion of findings for RQ3

Generally, it seems that the following main points can be inferred from the above discussion of findings for RQ3. First, based on the discussion, it seems that we can make the following generalization: students feel that teacher feedback can help them to improve their writing. Second, the above discussion shows that some findings for RQ3 answered Ferris' question about the development of students' critical thinking ability, which reminds genre teachers to better use EA feedback to facilitate students' development of their critical thinking ability. Third, in my study, the students related the helpfulness of teacher feedback to its actionability and its directness. To what extent these two feedback delivery approaches influence the feedback interaction remains a topic for continued research.

## 7.4 Chapter summary: The feedback-and-interpretation process

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings my study obtained gives us a clearer overall picture of the feedback-and-interpretation dynamic. During feedback provision, Teacher T interacted with student writing, the students (as feedback receivers, writers, classroom participants, and people who have emotion), herself (as a feedback provider, a critic, an instructor, and an emotional decision-maker), and various levels of contexts (e.g., classroom instruction). Overall, Teacher T's cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement in feedback provision did not vary greatly from one student to another. When interpreting teacher feedback, Students A, B, and C interacted not only with teacher feedback but also with their teacher. Before deciding whether to accept and incorporate teacher feedback, they not only cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively engaged with teacher feedback but also took various teacher factors (e.g., teacher understanding of their writing, teacher attitudes towards feedback) and context factors (e.g., text-level context) into consideration. Generally, as communication problems often arose during the feedback process, findings from my study support Clements' (2008) conclusion that we cannot always find the interactive feedback process "a smooth one" (p. 207). However, despite the feedback-and-interpretation process sometimes being difficult, my study still found that feedback-led learning occurred and an alignment between the teacher and the student, to some extent, had been achieved.

# Chapter 8 Conclusion

## 8.0 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, there are five sections apart from this introduction section. Sections one and two provide a brief review of the aims, the methodology, and the main findings of my study (8.1 and 8.2). Section three presents the empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical contributions (8.3). Section four focuses on the methodological limitations inherent in my study and their implications for future and further studies (8.4). Finally, my reflection on the research process is considered in the last section (8.5).

## 8.1 Aims and methodology of my study

My study, focusing on Chinese EFL teachers' non-error EA feedback, aimed to investigate the feedback-and-interpretation process and teachers'/students' evaluation of this process. To present a picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process, the following key issues related to it were examined in my study: what EA-related concerns teachers focus on, how teachers deliver EA feedback, how teachers make decisions regarding their feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches, to what extent students accept and incorporate EA feedback, and how students make decisions regarding their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback. The ultimate aim of my study was to extend the limited research base on non-error feedback and develop a better understanding of teacher written feedback.

Methodologically, my study utilised a case study approach. In this case study research, three teacher-student pairs constituted three cases. It was conducted at KEY university in China, an EFL educational context where more research on teacher feedback is still needed. To ensure data richness, my study collected the teacher's and students' documents (comments on student writing and the notes students took down in response to teacher feedback), along with think-aloud data and data from interviews (background interview, retrospective interview, ongoing interview, and final assessment interview).

## 8.2 Summary of key findings

**Findings for RQ1: Teachers' feedback foci/delivery approaches and decision-making**

With regards to teachers' feedback foci, my study found that Teacher T focused on EA feedback, and she constantly provided comments on topic statement, topic sentence, supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, conclusion, and overall organization of student writing. As to how Teacher T decided to focus on these issues, my study found that her decisions were informed by her beliefs and her heightened awareness of student problems. Furthermore, the examination culture of China also greatly influenced her decisions to focus on these issues.

Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches were identified from four perspectives. From the perspective of its orientation, Teacher T provided evaluator-response comments (e.g., problem/strength-oriented feedback), instructor-response comments (e.g., explanation feedback), and reader-response comments (e.g., feedback about the student writer's learning and process); from the perspective of its degree of scaffolding, two thirds of T's EA feedback were combination comments (e.g., a praise–criticism–explanation-revision quaternity) and one third were single-statement comments. From the perspective of the language channel used, Teacher T's comments were delivered half in English and half in Chinese. Moreover, from the perspective of changes, Teacher T provided more positive and hedged feedback with the passage of time.

According to Teacher T's verbal reports, in relation to her feedback delivery approaches, her decision-making was associated with the interaction among her cognitive, behavioural, and affective involvement during feedback (e.g., reading and interpreting student writing; consulting online dictionaries/resources; articulating her emotional state aroused by responding to student writing). Moreover, Teacher T's decisions were also found to be mediated by some teacher factors (e.g., teacher beliefs), contextual factors (e.g., instructional context, end-of-semester workload), or the interaction between teacher factors and contextual factors.

**Findings for RQ2: Students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback and decision-making**

As to students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback, my study reported that Students A, B, and C went through different experiences. Student A's self-regulated, deep-level acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback occurred when she interpreted teacher feedback on her first and second pieces of writing; but as she interpreted teacher feedback on her third piece of writing, she barely incorporated any EA feedback and her emotional acceptance of it shifted from appreciation of the feedback to dissatisfaction with it. Compared with Student A, Student B's acceptance and incorporation of Teacher T's EA feedback was slow and superficial (e.g., memorization of genre/rhetorical knowledge contained in EA feedback). In fact, she did not cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively accept and incorporate Teacher T's EA feedback until she dealt with the teacher feedback on her third piece of writing. Student C generally semi-accepted and -incorporated Teacher T's EA feedback; but, emotionally, Student C did not begin to accept Teacher T's EA feedback until she interpreted the teacher feedback on her second piece of writing.

With regards to how Students A, B, and C decided to accept and incorporate EA feedback, my study found that it was related to 1) the level at which the students cognitively processed EA feedback and 2) the interaction among their cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement with teacher feedback. Moreover, my study linked their acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback to 3) the influence of some student factors (what students bring into the feedback process, and what students consider during the feedback process), context factors (e.g., students' writing process, feedback-related factors, teacher-student relationship), or the interaction between the two.

**Findings for RQ3: Helpfulness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback**

In my study, the students and Teacher T were asked to evaluate whether Teacher T's EA feedback was helpful and whether they had achieved the self-regulation required to deal with various EA issues after feedback. Overall, they believed that the students became better writers and feedback receivers as the result of teacher feedback. Concerning the helpfulness of Teacher T's feedback on various EA issues (supporting evidence, topic statement and topic sentence, cohesion, coherence,

conclusion, and overall organization), what the students reported varied. However, they all believed that teacher feedback on supporting evidence led to the improvement of their writing.

## 8.3 Contributions of my study to the field of knowledge

In this section, the contributions my study have made are discussed. It begins with an account of its empirical and theoretical contributions from the perspective of research aims (8.3.1), and then moves on to explain its empirical and theoretical contributions from the perspective of the findings for each RQ (8.3.2). After that, the methodological implications for teacher feedback research (8.3.3) and the pedagogical implications for teaching writing and responding practices are identified (8.3.4).

### 8.3.1 The empirical and theoretical contributions: From the perspective of research aims

As argued in the Literature Review Chapter, my study aimed to

- (empirically) present a picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process so as to extend the research base on the feedback process and non-error feedback, and
- (theoretically) deepen our understanding of teacher written feedback.

Below, from the perspective of research aims, the empirical and theoretical contributions my study made are formulated.

### *Presenting a picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process: Empirical contributions*

From my study, a full picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process emerged. As a whole, the feedback-and-interpretation processes Teacher T and the students were involved in either started well and became difficult (Teacher T and Student A) or started out as difficult, but became easier as time progressed (Teacher T and Students B and C). Overall, the feedback-and-interpretation processes Teacher T and the students participated in were complicated and dynamic.

In the Literature Review Chapter, four most researched strands of feedback research were identified, including 1) student perspectives on teacher feedback (e.g., student evaluation of it), 2) the feedback itself (e.g., research about its effectiveness), 3)

teacher cognition (e.g., research about the teacher's feedback beliefs and practices), and 4) the feedback-and-interpretation/revision process. My study followed the trend started by Hyland and Hyland (2006a) to investigate the feedback-and-interpretation process (not the feedback-and-revision process that has received more attention from researchers). It complemented and enhanced Hyland and Hyland's study in the following ways.

First, complementing Hyland and Hyland's findings, my study exposed the dynamic nature of the feedback-and-interpretation process that both the teacher and the student participate in. For example, in my study, Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches changed over time; and Students A, B, and C went through different, changing experiences during feedback. As evidenced by the review of literature, Hyland and Hyland only briefly reported the students' interpretation of teacher feedback. To a large extent, their study, as a "preliminary" one (in Hyland and Hyland's words), did not give us a comprehensive, dynamic picture of the feedback process.

Second, complementing Hyland and Hyland's key findings about the interpersonal aspect of teacher feedback, my study exposed its interactional nature. For this interactional aspect of teacher feedback, two lines of evidence were reported in my study. The first line of evidence my study provided was that Teacher T's/the students' decisions about how to provide/interpret EA feedback were the result of the interaction among their cognitive, affective, and behavioural involvement in the feedback process. The second line of evidence showed how Teacher T delivered EA feedback was often influenced by the interaction between some teacher factors and contextual factors. Also, my study found that the interaction between student factors and contextual factors frequently influenced how the students accepted and incorporated EA feedback. Clearly, these two lines of evidence showed that one of the key characteristics of teacher written feedback is its "interactional" nature.

Third, my study supported Hyland and Hyland's argument that how teachers express their feedback and how students interpret that feedback are greatly influenced by their interpersonal considerations. For example, when writing feedback, Teacher T sometimes took her students' efforts or affective reactions into consideration, and then decided to soften the negativity of her feedback by accompanying her negative

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feedback with some positive words. An example related to the students' interpersonal considerations and their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback is as follows. Student C felt it was easier to take up teacher feedback when Teacher T commented (on her second piece of writing) "like a kind friend" than when Teacher T commented (on her first piece of writing) in a direct way "as an authoritative figure".

Fourth, my study supported Hyland and Hyland's conclusion that teachers used their assessment of the students' writing, the student writer, and the teaching context to decide how to express their feedback. In my study, to decide how to deliver feedback, Teacher T was often found to read student writing, interpret her students' writing intentions, evaluate student writing according to what they learnt from class, try to choose the most appropriate words to express her feedback, reflect on her teaching and feedback practice, and review her feedback to see whether she was satisfied with the comments she had written. That is to say, when writing feedback, Teacher T "interacted" not only with student texts, but also with the students, with the pedagogical context, and with herself. It is quite apparent that Hyland and Hyland's result was observed in my study. Both highlighted the complexity of the feedback process.

***Deepening understanding of teacher written feedback: Theoretical contributions***
On the theoretical level, to research on L2 teachers' feedback, my study contributed a perspective (a sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback) and empirical evidence that could support and better understand this perspective.

As argued in the Literature Review Chapter, my study adopted the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback. Thus far, the past four decades of research on teacher feedback have witnessed the following trends in viewing teacher feedback: a product-oriented, textual perspective (focusing on the feedback itself), a contextualized perspective (emphasizing a consideration of the varying layers of contexts in which teacher feedback is given and taken), a social-oriented perspective (considering feedback as teacher-student conversation), and a sociocultural perspective (equating feedback with sociocultural scaffolding, or using activity theory to define it). Based on the latest research trend toward focusing on the complex, dynamic feedback process from the sociocultural perspective, my study

adopted Atkinson's sociocognitive theory of learning and development to conceptualize teacher feedback. This sociocognitive perspective is illuminating because the three basic principles underlying it (the inseparability, adaptivity, and alignment principles) allow us to see 1) how the teacher offers feedback, 2) how the student attends to teacher feedback, 3) how the teacher, the student, the feedback itself (as the text-level context), and the context interact with each other, and 4) how student learning and development occur.

Adopting a sociocognitive perspective to view teacher feedback in my study is not completely innovative since Han (2016) has already applied it to her doctoral thesis study on written corrective feedback. However, Han's study focused on students' engagement with written corrective feedback. As such, on the theoretical level, Han mainly made clear 1) how the learner deals with written corrective feedback and 2) how learning via written corrective feedback occurs. From the perspective of sociocognitive theory, my study comprehensively revealed the role both teachers and students (the two sides of the ecosocial interaction) play during feedback.

From the findings of the current study, we can see the explanatory value of the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback. As mentioned above, underlying Atkinson's sociocognitive theory are the inseparability, adaptivity, and alignment principles. According to Nishino and Atkinson (2015), **the inseparability principle** holds that the mind, body, and ecosocial world are inseparable contributors in ecosocial interaction (i.e., social interaction between human beings and ecological and social interaction between human beings and non-human environments) and learning; so, to understand the ecosocial interaction processes and learning, these elements need to be considered together. In simple words, from a sociocognitive perspective, to construct and maintain ecosocial interaction, the mind, body, and world are functionally integrated, instead of separated (Atkinson, 2014). As to **the adaptivity principle**, it holds that ecosocial interaction requires the coordination of individuals with each other or the high-skilled coordination between individuals and their nonhuman environments (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015). With regards to **the alignment principle**, Atkinson (2014) metaphorically explained that it means that the ecosocial interaction where learning opportunities lie is like a cooperative (not

competitive) ping pong game, in which two or more partners coordinate or align their activities sensitively and moment-by-moment for their mutual benefit (learning).

The sociocognitive inseparability principle can explain the role Teacher T/the students play in the feedback process. In my study, Teacher T constructed interaction/feedback with/for the students. To decide how to express her feedback, her cognitive, behavioral, and emotional investments were interrelated with each other. Meanwhile, her decision-making thought process was influenced by some contextual factors, such as the sociocultural background (the examination culture of China) she was rooted in. As such, my findings showed that Teacher T wrote feedback as a "mindbodyworld" (Atkinson, 2014) ecology and provided strong evidence for the sociocognitive perspective on teacher feedback. As far as the students are concerned, how they decided to participate in the teacher-student interaction/feedback process was the result of 1) the interaction among their cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement with EA feedback and 2) the influence of a range of contextual factors (e.g., textual-level context). That is to say, the students, like Teacher T, also participated in the social interaction/feedback process through the workings of their "mindbodyworld".

In addition, the other two sociocognitive principles (adaptivity and alignment principles) can explain more roles Teacher T and the students play during interaction/the feedback process. For example, in my study, Teacher T employed a variety of cognitive operations to construct interaction/feedback, such as reading at a deeper level to identify the students' writing intention (to accompany her negative feedback with positive words), evaluating students' affective reactions to teacher feedback (to comment less directly), making efforts to select a better word to express her feedback (to write quality feedback), and so on. These operations Teacher T adaptively carried out when writing feedback clearly indicated her devotion to making adaptations and to achieving teacher-student coordination and alignment. Atkinson's adaptivity and alignment principles can also be used to explain the roles the students played during feedback process. For example, when attending to EA feedback, Student A usually processed it at a deep level. Also, my study found that sometimes she tried to regulate her negative emotions, and sometimes she self-initiated help-seeking behaviours. In other words, during feedback, Student A

cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally adapted herself to the feedback/interaction Teacher T constructed and made great efforts to align with the "world"/feedback in the course of interaction.

Moreover, how Students A, B, and C's learning and development occurred can also be explained by Atkinson's sociocognitive theory. Here is an example. In my study, Student B felt difficult to interpret Teacher T's EA feedback on her first piece of writing. However, on Student B's second piece of writing, Teacher T provided more positive feedback and a larger amount of EA feedback in general (as reported in Chapter 4, findings on RQ1). As Student B noticed these changes, she cognitively and affectively became more receptive to Teacher T's EA feedback. Moreover, when processing Teacher T's feedback on her second piece of writing, B had developed some familiarity with Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches and gained some awareness of her own problems with argumentation. Generally, by such mutually adaptive interaction and coordination, Student B's slow, increasing acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback occurred.

Generally, the above discussion indicates that the three basic principles that underlie the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback can create a clear interpretation of the roles Teacher T and the students played in the feedback process/interaction and the occurrence of student learning. Simply, my findings validated this perspective of teacher feedback.

### 8.3.2 The empirical and theoretical contributions: From the perspective of research questions

My study reported the following aspects of findings for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3:

1) the EA-related concerns teachers focus on;
2) the approaches teachers use to deliver EA feedback;
3) how teachers' feedback foci and delivery approaches were decided;
4) students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback;
5) how students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback were decided; and
6) how students and teachers evaluate the helpfulness of teacher-student interaction via EA feedback.

The empirical contributions of the findings mentioned above, together with their contributions to theory (Atkinson's sociocognitive theory or SFL-informed genre pedagogy), are presented in the following six sub-sections (8.3.2.1-8.3.2.6). At the

end of this section, the empirical and theoretical contributions my study made from the perspective of research questions are summarized (8.3.2.7).

**8.3.2.1 The EA-related concerns teachers focus on**

*Empirical contribution*

As indicated above, so far, four main strands of research on teacher feedback have been identified: 1) student perspectives on teacher feedback, 2) the feedback itself, 3) teacher cognition, and 4) the feedback-and-response process. My findings about the EA issues Teacher T focused on made some contributions to the strand of **research on the feedback itself**.

In my study, finer-grained findings were reported. As indicated in the Literature Review Chapter, most of the available research on feedback itself only roughly reported the extent to which teacher feedback focused on content, organization, vocabulary and grammar. For example, Li's (2016) study showed that 31% of teacher feedback was focused on content, 26% on vocabulary, and 14% on organization. My study went one step further to investigate the subcategories that fell under Teacher T's EA feedback (the feedback related to the organization of students' expository writing), finding that she wrote feedback mainly on *topic statement*, *topic sentence*, *supporting evidence*, *cohesion and coherence*, and *the concluding paragraph* of her students' expository writing. More studies like mine, together with the error feedback research that has already offered a detailed way of analysing the various errors L2 teachers usually focus on (e.g., Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005), can build a detailed picture of L2 teachers' feedback focus.

*Theoretical implications for SFL-informed genre pedagogy*

My findings about Teacher T's feedback focus also had theoretical implications for genre pedagogy. According to Hyland (2007), genre pedagogies include four components: *planning learning* (e.g., gathering sample texts), *sequencing learning* (e.g., determining the most critical skills relevant to students' immediate needs), *scaffolding learning* (e.g., analysing and modelling good expository texts for students), and *assessing learning* (e.g., assessing student writing against clear and agreed upon performance criteria). My findings about Teacher T's feedback foci, as well as the similar findings from L2 academic and non-academic writing contexts (e.g., Clements, 2008; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Z.

Wang, 2011), suggest the following: at the stage of planning, sequencing, scaffolding, and assessing learning of expository writing, the issues of topic statement, topic sentence, supporting evidence, cohesion and coherence, and the concluding paragraph should become L2 genre teachers' central focus. For example, when L2 genre teachers gather sample texts for their expository writing class (at the stage of planning learning), the criteria on which to base their selection of the sample texts should be whether the materials can draw students' attention to the various key EA issues identified in my study.

### 8.3.2.2 The approaches teachers use to deliver EA feedback

*Empirical contribution*

Specifically, my study found that Teacher T provided a similar amount of strengths-oriented feedback (positive comments), problems-oriented feedback (negative comments), explanations, advice/suggestions, and revisions when commenting on EA issues (each about 20%), and 60% of her EA feedback was written in the form of combination feedback (e.g., praise–criticism–suggestion-explanation quaternary). My findings about Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches also made a contribution to **research on the feedback itself**.

In my study, Teacher T's typical feedback delivery approaches were categorized from the perspectives of orientation (e.g., strengths/problems-oriented feedback), scaffolding degree (e.g., single-statement/combination feedback), its language channel (e.g., English/Chinese feedback), and changes of teacher feedback. According to the Literature Review Chapter, there are currently two main traditions of research on the feedback itself. In the tradition of Ferris, teachers' feedback delivery approaches are studied mainly from the perspective of their pragmatic functions (e.g., statement, imperative, and question; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999); in the tradition of Hyland and Hyland, teachers' feedback delivery approaches are usually studied according to their orientation (e.g., praise, criticism, and suggestion; Hyland & Hyland, 2001). My study found that Teacher T only occasionally wrote questioning feedback and her EA feedback became less imperative (more hedged) with the passage of time. Largely, my study continued the research tradition Hyland and Hyland's studies established, and supported Hyland and Hyland's finding that teachers provided similar amounts of positive (strengths-oriented) and negative (problems-oriented) feedback. Moreover, my study also supported Hyland and

Hyland's (2001) finding that L2 teachers often provided combination feedback, such as "the praise–criticism–suggestion triad" (p. 196).

***Theoretical contribution to the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback***

In the Literature Review Chapter, from the sociocognitive perspective, the feedback itself is considered as the text-level context the teacher constructs in the feedback process, and students' interaction with it offers potential for their learning and development. In my study, the findings about Teacher T's feedback delivery approaches unveiled the details of the text-level context L2 teachers construct in practice: a similar amount of positive/negative comments, explanations, advice/suggestions, and revisions; and most of EA feedback was combination feedback. From Teacher T's frequent acknowledgement of the strengths of student writing and her frequent provision of combination feedback to scaffold her students' understanding of teacher feedback there is an indication that the text-level context teachers constructed had at least two layers: the interpersonal layer and the pedagogic layer.

### 8.3.2.3 How teachers decide what to focus on and how to deliver EA feedback

***Empirical contribution***

As reviewed in Section 8.1, behind Teacher T's decisions about feedback focus and feedback delivery approaches, there were different thinking, behaviours, and affective considerations. However, if we look at them together, the influence of teacher belief/cognition stands out. On the one hand, my study found that Teacher T's decisions about feedback focus were mainly informed by her beliefs about what EA issues to focus on. On the other hand, my study found that Teacher T's decisions about feedback delivery approaches were not always informed by her beliefs. She believed that she would mainly provide EA feedback directly, but, in reality, she provided more hedged comments with the passage of time. Simply put, my study indicated that Teacher T's actual practices were both consistent and inconsistent with her feedback beliefs.

It is obvious that my findings about the belief-practice consistency and inconsistency contributed new empirical evidence to the line of **research on teacher cognition**. So far, feedback studies on teacher cognition have reported three main types of findings: belief-practice inconsistency (e.g., Lee, 2008a), belief-practice consistency (e.g.,

Min, 2013), and both belief-practice consistency and inconsistency (e.g., Ferris, 2014). Here, it is not possible to say that my study offered further evidence to the studies that shared findings (e.g., Ferris, 2014). This is because, in Ferris' (2014) study, teachers felt they frequently used *questions* while they actually used more statements and imperatives and the belief-practice inconsistency was related to questioning feedback. In my study, the belief-practice inconsistency was related to direct/hedged EA feedback. Clearly, there is still a need for further, detailed research on teacher cognition and beliefs to explain mixed results and generalize findings.

***Contribution to understanding the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback***
As elaborated in Section 8.3.1, the three basic principles (the inseparability, adaptivity, and alignment principles) that underlay the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback can explain my findings about how Teacher T made decisions about feedback focus and feedback delivery approaches. Furthermore, the evidence related to Teacher T's decision-making pointed to the dynamics of teacher feedback.

My study contributed two types of supporting evidence about the dynamics of teacher feedback. First, my study found that, with the passage of time, Teacher T's feedback beliefs about focusing on EA issues were heightened and her feedback practices were informed by her increased awareness. This finding suggests that teacher beliefs are evolving and dynamic in nature, which accordingly makes teacher feedback inherently dynamic. Second, Teacher T's feedback focus and feedback delivery approaches were found to be context-sensitive. The following specific evidence highlighted the susceptibility of teacher feedback to context and its dynamic/changing nature: Teacher T's decisions about how to deliver EA feedback were greatly influenced by the cognitive overload engendered by her provision of complicated EA feedback.

## 8.3.2.4 Students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback
*Empirical contribution*
As indicated in the Literature Review Chapter, one of the research strands in focus explores **feedback from the perspective of students**. My findings about students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback made three major contributions to this strand of research.

First, my findings were much broader in scope. As pointed out in the Literature Review Chapter, the amount of empirical work on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback at the feedback-interpreting stage is still very limited and the available findings were mainly related to whether students had difficulties in understanding teacher feedback or the intention of teacher feedback. My findings, going beyond that, reported on whether the students cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally understood, agreed with, and incorporated teacher feedback when they were in the act of processing teacher feedback.

Second, because of my study, the generalizability of findings about students' acceptance and incorporation of teacher feedback becomes complicated. As to the students' understanding of, agreement with, and incorporation of EA feedback, my study found that Students A, B, and C were unique individuals. For example, although it was difficult for the students to accept and incorporate feedback on supporting evidence, Student A could understand it by turning to online resources for help, Student B could gradually understand it over time, and Student C often could understand it but still had some questions about how to act on it. Now, findings from previous studies about students' understanding of teacher feedback are diverse (e.g., having difficulty, not having difficulty, and sometimes having difficulty in understanding teacher feedback). Due to the uniqueness of my findings, it seems hard to say my findings supported any of these three positions.

However, it seems that my study is capable of supporting some studies that touched upon students' emotional acceptance of teacher feedback. In my study, Students A, B, and C all experienced a change in terms of emotional acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback (Student A: from emotional acceptance to dissatisfaction; Students B and C: from emotional non-acceptance to acceptance). Although no changes were reported in Clements' (2008) study, my study seems to lend some support to his findings that each of his student participants was a unique case (either emotionally accepted teacher feedback or felt overwhelmed by and unsatisfied with it). My study also supports Mahfoodh's (2017) report that students' emotional acceptance of teacher feedback varied from one student to another.

*Theoretical implications for SFL-informed genre pedagogy*

My findings about the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback inform L2 genre teachers what is necessary when they *sequence learning* and *scaffold learning*. In my study, the students experienced the following difficulties when they interpreted EA feedback (especially feedback on supporting evidence): inability to understand it (e.g., Student B), inaccurate understanding of it (e.g., Student B), disagreement with it (e.g., Students A, B, and C), and uncertainty about their understanding of teachers' intention (e.g., Student C). As mentioned in Section 8.3.2.1, when *sequencing learning*, genre teachers need to determine the most critical skills relevant to students' immediate needs. Hyland (2007) also pointed out that the degree and the forms of scaffolding play a key role in helping students reach a higher level of performance. These difficulties pinned down in my study make the instruction related to EA issues in general and supporting evidence in particular central to the teaching of exposition writing. Meanwhile, when L2 genre teachers provide scaffolding to help students deal with these difficult EA issues, it seems that direct, deep, and long-term scaffolding is needed and diversified forms of scaffolding are necessary.

### 8.3.2.5 How the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback was decided

*Empirical contribution*

As to the decision-making processes students engage themselves in as they process teacher feedback, this is a novel area of research that holds particular promise (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a), but which so far has been explored by only a handful of researchers. As such, one of the most important contributions my study made was presenting some novel findings about students' decision-making in relation to their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback.

Concerning how students decide on their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback, my study found it was related to 1) the depth of their cognitive processing of EA feedback, 2) the interaction among their cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with EA feedback, and 3) the influence of a range of student factors (e.g., motivation) and contextual factors (e.g., text-level context like feedback clarity). Previous studies have so far mainly identified a number of factors that influenced students' processing and actual use of teacher feedback (e.g., student

motivation; Goldstein, 2006). Generally, my study confirmed the influence of those factors identified in previous studies.

### *Contribution to understanding SFL-informed genre pedagogy*

My findings related to student decision-making make students' learning in the genre-based classroom concrete. According to genre theorists (e.g., Hyland, 2007), genre teachers need to prepare opportunities for students to engage in, explore, explain, extend, and evaluate their learning. In my study, Student A's cognitive engagement with EA feedback clearly indicates how students carry out these engagement, explanation, exploration, extension, and evaluation operations and how learning occurs. For example, my study found that Student A frequently **explained** teacher feedback in her own words (e.g., summarizing the key point of EA feedback) and **explored** in great depth the factors behind teacher feedback (e.g., identifying the implications of teacher feedback). Furthermore, sometimes she also adaptively **extended** the range of her learning opportunities to critically read, evaluate, and analyse a model text she found online. In addition, Student A also kept using teacher feedback to critically **evaluate** her own work and analyse her own writing problems. That is to say, because of her **deep-level cognitive engagement** with EA feedback, Student A accepted and incorporated EA feedback, and as a result, she learnt and developed relatively faster than the other two students.

### 8.3.2.6 Students' and teachers' evaluation of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback

### *Empirical contribution*

As illustrated in Sub-section 8.3.2.4, my findings related to the students' acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback made contributions to **research on students' perspectives on teacher feedback.** Apparently, my findings about students' evaluation of the teacher-student interaction via EA feedback also made some empirical contributions to this strand of research. The major contributions can be outlined from three perspectives.

As one contribution, my study enriched the empirical knowledge about students' perspectives on teacher feedback. To date, few studies have ever asked the students to evaluate the extent to which each type of EA feedback (feedback on topic statement and topic sentence, supporting evidence, cohesion, coherence, and the

concluding paragraph) was helpful for them to become better writers. As a result, my study contributed two types of novel findings to the literature: 1) the degree of helpfulness of each specific EA feedback often varied across the students (e.g., Students A and B felt cohesion feedback was helpful while Student C felt it was very helpful.); 2) what the students based their evaluation on was also identified (e.g., lack of motivation for attending to cohesion feedback). These two types of findings are useful for genre teachers when they consider how to facilitate the effectiveness of EA feedback for student development.

As another contribution, my finding about the students' overall assessment of the helpfulness of EA feedback increases the likelihood of the generalizability of findings. So far, a number of studies have reported that ESL and EFL university students generally felt that their teachers' feedback on all aspects of their texts helped them progress as writers. As Students A, B, and C all considered that teacher feedback was helpful for them to become better writers and better feedback receivers, it seems that a generalizable result about the helpfulness of teacher feedback can be tentatively established.

However, my study does not facilitate the generalizability of findings about the helpfulness of hedged feedback. As listed in the Literature Review Chapter, previous studies diverged in their findings about the helpfulness of hedged feedback (e.g., useful, harmful, or unclear). In fact, in my study, the findings were not very clear. For example, in the ongoing interviews, Student C reported that hedged feedback enhanced her motivation to deal with teacher feedback and it was more helpful than direct feedback; but in the final interview, when Student C made further comparison, she reported that she benefitted more from direct feedback in the long run.

***Contribution to understanding the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback***
In my study, feedback intensity, feedback actionability, and feedback contents seemed to be important factors the students based their evaluation of EA feedback on These feedback-related factors highlight that they are probably the most crucial issues concerning the text-level context (i.e., teacher feedback) the teacher constructs.

### 8.3.2.7 The contributions my study made from the perspective of research questions: A summary

In brief, as the result of my findings about Teacher T's writing of feedback (RQ1), the students' processing of EA feedback (RQ2), and student/teacher evaluation of EA feedback (RQ3), my study expanded scholarship on three strands of feedback research: 1) research on students' perspectives on teacher feedback, 2) research on the feedback itself, and 3) research on teacher cognition. However, it seems that my research findings mainly increase the complexity of our understanding of the previous results. As each student in my study was found to be unique and their acceptance and incorporation of EA feedback changed over time, my study generally cannot improve the generalizability of existing results.

Furthermore, the above elaboration (Sub-sections 8.3.2.1-8.3.2.6) shows that my findings about Teacher T's writing of feedback and the students' processing of EA feedback enhanced our understanding of the sociocognitive perspective of teacher feedback and genre pedagogy. First, the nature of the text-level context Teacher T constructed (i.e., teacher feedback) became clearer (an interpersonal context and a pedagogic context). Second, the most crucial issues concerning the text-level context were identified (e.g., feedback intensity, feedback actionability, etc.). Third, as far as genre pedagogy is concerned, the contribution of my findings lay in their implications for the role L2 genre teachers and students play in the classroom that teaches expository writing (e.g., teachers' role in designing and maintaining class focus; students' role in interacting with the text-level context).

### 8.3.3 Contributions of my study to methodological insights

As pointed out in the Methodology Chapter, my study was a case study research and replicated the main methods (think-alouds and retrospective interviews) Hyland and Hyland used in their study about the feedback-and-interpretation dynamic. Considering the RQs addressed in my study were adequately answered, the methods chosen were suitable for providing the best possible answers to my RQs. Furthermore, a closer examination of how my study was conducted yields some methodological insights regarding collection, analysis, and report of data.

First, since it is often considered that the use of think-alouds carries a risk of increased attention and deeper processing (Jourdenais, 2001), it is necessary to

highlight the insight derived from my application of the think-aloud method. To a large extent, my study did not clearly show that the use of think-alouds runs a high risk of increased attention and deeper processing. In my study, Students A, B, and C cognitively processed EA feedback at a deep, a superficial, and a moderately deep level. It seems that Student B was not stimulated to engage herself in longer and deeper information processing because of thinking aloud. In fact, in my study, the student participants did not seem to have great difficulties with the think-aloud tasks. Certainly, the main reason for this is that, when the students were verbalizing their thoughts, they were not faced with the dual task like writing and thought-verbalizing at the same time. Instead, they only needed to interpret EA feedback and verbalize it, which might be much less cognitively demanding.

In my study, Teacher T could produce long think-aloud protocols and she did not feel that she had difficulties with think-aloud tasks either. However, as she had to type in comments and verbalize thoughts at the same time, think-alouds caused cognitive overload when she was constructing feedback on the concluding paragraph. Teacher T mentioned that, when commenting on the concluding paragraph, she felt tired for thinking aloud (and for dealing with the "logic"-related EA issues). In future studies that design to use the think-aloud method, how to reduce the cognitive demands on the participants should be considered.

Second, my findings about the belief-practice consistency and inconsistency contributed some methodological knowledge to studying teachers' feedback beliefs. In my study, in terms of Teacher T's feedback foci and feedback delivery approaches, belief-practice consistency and belief-practice inconsistency were clearly observable. By implication, when teacher belief is studied, breaking it down according to whether it is related to feedback foci or feedback delivery approaches can make the issue of belief-practice consistency/inconsistency much easier to operationalize and study. Borg (2015) also claimed that deconstructing teacher belief into the many different foci could better study the concept of teacher belief.

Third, my study made a significant contribution to research on non-error feedback by offering a system of codes to analyze the verbal report data (See Appendices J and K). So far, although there have been a handful of research studies investigating the

teacher/student decision-making thought process during feedback (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Kumar, 2012), there is not a set of codes readily available in previous literature. According to Nunan (1993), to report teachers' classroom decision-making (in a 43-page research paper), he spent hours going through the data and constructing the analytical codes and categories out of the data itself. The construction of my codes and categories was also mainly grounded in the data. However, as a doctoral study thesis, constructing the analytical codes and categories out of the data was more demanding. Even with the aid of the NVivo software, it took me months to decipher and re-decipher data, and to code and re-code data. Although the code system created in my study might not be fully applicable in future/further studies, at least some insights can be gained from it when it is referred to.

Fourth, the other methodological contribution my study made lay in its data reporting. According to Yin (2014), case study reports can be presented in the traditional narrative form or in the alternative question-and-answer form. Generally, the case studies that are presently available are mainly reported in the narrative form (e.g., Clements, 2008; Goldstein, 2006). In Yin's view, presenting case study reports in the question-and-answer form is clearer, and readers can directly examine the answers related to each RQ. In my own experience with reporting case study evidence in the question-and-answer format, using this format made the complicated, messy feedback process easier to report and this style of report is suitable for me as a novice researcher.

### 8.3.4 Recommendations for practice

My study delivers the following general and specific practical insights.

On the whole, my study reassures EFL genre teachers that feedback and EA feedback on student writing are worthwhile investments of teacher time and effort. This is because my study, along with many previous studies, verified Ferris' (2003), Ferris and Hedgcock's (2014), and Hyland and Hyland's (2006b) assertion that "students themselves definitively feel teacher feedback is valuable to them and that it helps them to improve their writing" (Ferris, 2003, p. 28). Also, the findings of my study (about helpfulness of EA feedback for students **as feedback receivers**) imply that EA feedback may facilitate students' development of critical thinking abilities.

However, commenting on EA issues is a tremendous struggle (Min, 2013). There are two main reasons for this difficulty in providing EA feedback. First, my study found that Teacher T provided EA feedback in "mindbodyworld" (Atkinson, 2014) and it usually came at a high cognitive, emotional, and behavioral cost. Second, my findings related to the cross-student variations show that there may be great individual differences among Chinese EFL students. This adds another layer of difficulty to feedback writing since it is necessary for teachers to know students and customize their feedback to each student's writing and language abilities, their motivation for learning English and writing in English, their insights into EA issues and English writing, and their needs, to name a few.

To resolve the difficulty that giving EA feedback is costly, teachers may need to be selective (Ferris, 2003), responding only to the issues that have been covered in class and helping the students focus on a limited number of issues in their writing (Andrade & Evans, 2013). My study seems to indicate that, an easier provision of EA feedback may depend on whether teachers have availed themselves of more cost-saving (meta)cognitive and concrete resources before writing EA comments. For example, my study was aware that teacher response is essentially about the ways in which teachers read student writing, not just adding notes to students' papers. Hence, a good, deep-level reading of student writing can provide teachers with good cognitive resources. That is to say, a good, deep-level reading of student writing can help teachers accurately capture the weakness in student writing and identify its reasons, which then can help teachers suggest alternatives more easily. In my study, Teacher T's affective involvement with feedback writing included her emotional response to student writing, her emotional states aroused by responding to student texts, and her (dis)satisfaction with her own comments. Teachers' pre-knowledge of these types of emotional investments may help them develop some conscious metacognitive strategies in advance and write EA feedback more efficiently. Moreover, in my study, Teacher T often used online resources (i.e., one type of her behavioral operations) to ensure that the revised version she provided to the students greatly improved the original. Considering Teacher T often searched the widely-used Chinese search engine *Baidu* or consulted online dictionaries developed by some Chinese companies (e.g., *Youdao)*, the use of corpora and corpus-based tools for writing instruction (e.g., the British National Corpus; the Corpus of Contemporary

American English, etc.) can be introduced to Chinese EFL teachers. The use of corpora and corpus-based tools can help teachers save the time and efforts they spend on judging and analyzing the random, unmoderated collection of materials available on search engines. Furthermore, the provision of feedback should certainly be attuned to the students' needs and developmental levels. As to how to do it, Ferris (2003) suggested that teachers diagnose rhetorical and grammatical problems during the first week of class and create more opportunities to get to know the students' ability, personality, and attitudes toward writing and the writing course (e.g., asking students to write a journal about themselves and reading student journals). Moreover, as pointed out in Sub-section 8.3.2.4, my study pinned down some difficulties students may encounter in accepting and incorporating EA feedback. These difficulties identified in my study provided a good starting point for teachers' teaching and responding practices as well.

Specifically, in my study, Students A, B, and C all believed that Teacher T's feedback on the concluding paragraph was not very helpful. As such, Chinese EFL teachers are advised to be particularly careful when providing feedback on this aspect. According to Students B and C, what was deeply rooted in their writing of the concluding paragraph was indeed a set format their high school teacher asked them to strictly follow and, in fact, they did not know how to write the concluding paragraph at all. If this were the case, how to solve this deeply-rooted problem and help students understand how to conclude their writing probably should be an important consideration for Chinese EFL teachers. Moreover, in my study, the helpfulness of Teacher T feedback on the specific variables of topic statement and topic sentence, cohesion, and coherence varied across students. For example, Students A and B did not consider feedback on connectives (a type of cohesion feedback) particularly helpful while they felt that teacher feedback on referential pronouns (another type of cohesion feedback) was useful. Accordingly, to best intervene in EA issues (topic statement and topic sentence, cohesion, coherence, and supporting evidence), it seems necessary for teachers to identify the variables that fall under each EA issue first (e.g., Cheung & Lee, 2018) and then selectively and purposefully focus their comments on the specific variables based on students' needs and developmental readiness.

From the perspective of feedback delivery approaches, Students A, B, and C took a variety of feedback-related factors into consideration when interacting with teacher feedback and when evaluating the helpfulness of EA feedback (e.g., feedback content, feedback clarity, feedback intensity, suitability of feedback to student ability, feedback actionability). Hence, it is natural to point out that informative, clear, interactive, and actionable feedback are possibly the most effective responding method choices. Certainly, no matter what type of feedback is delivered, what is very important is that students should be informed of the teachers' philosophies and intentions in advance (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

## 8.4 Limitations of my study and implications for future/further research

Inevitably, in relation to what was studied (e.g., study scopes) in my research and how my study was conducted (e.g., research methods), there are a number of limitations. Each limitation acknowledged below is accompanied by my comments about how it can be alleviated in future or further research.

First (scope limitation), my study did not distinguish between e-feedback (teacher feedback delivered electronically via the computer) and handwritten feedback (feedback in pen and paper format). As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, in my study, Teacher T preferred delivering e-feedback, feeling that it was more legible, efficient, and convenient. However, as Teacher T did not consider it was different from her handwritten feedback, my study neglected this aspect of her feedback. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in investigating e-feedback (e.g., Ene & Upton, 2014; Ene & Upton, 2018). Studies have reported that e-feedback either shared many of the characteristics of handwritten feedback (Ene & Upton, 2014) or it better led to students' uptake of it (e.g., Cheung, 2015; Tuzi, 2004). These mixed results in the literature on e-feedback, though still small, imply that electronically-delivered feedback may influence both teachers and students. Informed by my study, future/further studies are suggested to take the feedback delivery mode (handwritten feedback or e-feedback) into consideration and identify how it interacts with the other factors in the feedback process.

Second (scope limitation), my findings indicated that my study, aiming to paint a picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process, was somewhat broad in scope. In fact, to avoid the problem that the research scope was too broad, my topic was limited to the teacher's focus and delivery approaches related to **EA feedback**, the teacher's decision-making thought process while he/she was **writing** comments, and the student's **acceptance and incorporation** of EA feedback while he/she was **processing** EA feedback. However, as the teacher's/student's decision-making thought process is complicated, it was difficult to cover all the components of it in detail when I was analysing data. For example, when analysing data, I found that Students A, B, and C's affective engagement with EA feedback could be specifically coded as surprise, (dis)satisfaction, joy, and pride, to name a few. As it was difficult to cover all these details in depth, my categorization of the students' affective engagement with EA feedback had to be made from a wide angle (i.e., emotional feeling aroused by feedback; affective evaluation of self-written text; and affective evaluation of feedback). To address this limitation, future researchers can perhaps focus their attention on one of the key aspects of teacher feedback, be it the pedagogical, interpersonal, interactional, or dynamic aspect. Another way to address this limitation is to focus on several key parameters involved in the feedback-and-interpretation process. For example, in my study, some key factors stood out, such as the teacher's teaching and responding experience, the teacher's belief, the genre of the writing task, the student's motivation, the student's agency, and so forth. In future/further investigations, these issues could be given priority and be treated at length.

Third (scope limitation), my study failed to look into "the interface between L2 writing and SLA [second language acquisition]" (Hyland, Nicolas-Conesa & Cereza, 2016, p. 443). In my study, 15% of Teacher T's feedback was provided on error feedback and the students did spend some time and effort on it. Considering one of the typical characteristics of the feedback-and-interpretation process is its interactional aspect, whether and how the students' engagement with the error feedback and non-error feedback interact with each other are questions that need to be considered by researchers. Moreover, in my study, Student A's deep-level engagement with the feedback helped her internalize the genre/rhetorical knowledge included in Teacher T's feedback on supporting evidence. Then, another question

arises: is it possible that Student A's engagement with error feedback contributes to her acquisition of genre/rhetorical knowledge, and vice versa? These two unexplored questions probably merit future research.

Fourth (scope limitation), my study was conducted in a single draft classroom. In my study, pedagogical context was reported as a key factor that influenced not only how Teacher T expressed feedback but also how the students interpreted EA feedback. In this case, whether the study is conducted in the single-draft or multiple-draft context could produce different results. In the future, comparative studies and replicative studies in other types of pedagogical context can be conducted.

Fifth (methodological limitation), one of the obvious methodological limitations of my study is the relatively small number of participating students and teachers. As indicated in the Methodology Chapter, my study was an embedded case study (including both the teacher and the students), in which three teacher-student pairs constituted three cases. According to Remenyi (2012), based on the research questions, a doctoral degree candidate would be advised to select three or four cases. That is to say, considering the complexity of my research question (about the participants' decision-making thought process), a three-case study was adequate for a doctoral degree and my exploratory work provides a foundation for future/further investigation. Still, four teacher-student pairs/cases (two teachers and two students of each teacher) might be ideal. Under such a condition, the complex and dynamic picture of the feedback-and-interpretation process might be better presented. In short, for future/further research that chooses to use multiple cases, "how many cases?" (Creswell, 2013, p. 101) will continue to be an issue that needs to be carefully considered by researchers.

Sixth (methodological limitation), another methodological limitation of my study is its data variety. According to an anonymous scholar, in a case study, "everything is data" (as cited in Hood, 2009). In retrospect, it might have been illuminating if I had collected the following types of data: the email messages Teacher T and the students sent to each other when the writing assignments were submitted and returned, the students' subsequent treatment of Teacher T's feedback after thinking alouds, the students' use of the web-based automatic feedback (*www.pigai.org*), and classroom

observation. These types of data would supply additional contextual information and facilitate a greater understanding of the feedback-and-interpretation process. Generally, case study researchers probably need to bear in mind that no form or source of data is off limits if it contributes to a better understanding of the case (Hood, 2009).

## 8.5 Final remarks

Generally speaking, my study found that the feedback-and-interpretation process did not always go very well, and it had several typical features (complex, dynamic, interpersonal, and interactional features). As a result of these findings, I had clear answers to the questions that preoccupied my mind when I was teaching in China. Empirically and theoretically, my study achieved the aim to gain a better understanding of the feedback-and-interpretation process and the construct *"teacher written feedback"*.

Today, according to Manchón (2016), there is a need "to look into the role of technology in the domain of feedback studies" (p. 11). In fact, due to the rapid growth of the use of electronic devices in language classes, e-feedback, computer-generated, and web-based automatic feedback have already begun to attract the attention of researchers (e.g., Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Despite this, as it has been found that students value teachers' non-error feedback (e.g., feedback on organization and content) more highly than that comes from computers (Zhang & Hyland, 2018), there is certainly a need for future research to continue to provide insights into the process that takes place during which the teacher provides non-error feedback and the student attends to non-error feedback.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval

**A U T**
U N I V E R S I T Y
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

**A U T E C**
**S E C R E T A R I A T**

26 February 2015

John Bitchener
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear John

Re Ethics Application:     **15/34 Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository argumentation (EA): A process-oriented perspective.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 26 February 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.  When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 26 February 2018;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.  This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 26 February 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants.  You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only.  If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.  If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us.  If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

## Appendix B: Participation Information Sheets

**Participant Information Sheet to the Teacher Participant**

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**
January 10, 2015
**Project Title:**
*Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository argumentation (EA): A process-oriented perspective*

**An Invitation**
As you have been aware, my name is Bian, Xiaoyun, at present in the process of completing my Ph.D. degree under the supervision of Prof. John Bitchener in the School of Language and Culture at Auckland University of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. Now I cordially invite you to participate in my doctoral study. This study is a naturalistic case study of one-semester duration, which is expected to take place during the spring semester of the Chinese 2015-2016 academic year. I will investigate how argumentation-related feedback on expository writing (i.e., text-level feedback on organization, content, etc.) is given and processed in a Chinese university-level EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class context. This form will describe the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant in this study.

As your former colleague, I realize you can provide crucial information for this research and will significantly contribute to the success of this study. It can be said that it is difficult to find one to replace you if you decline to participate in the study. However, your decision to participate in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no prejudice against you, or penalty, or loss of benefits that you are entitled to receive. You also have the right to withdraw from participation at any time prior to the completion of data collection. Your status at school will not be affected in any way from your decision to withdraw from the study. If you withdraw, all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, which you have provided for this project will be destroyed.

**What is the purpose of this research?**
This research aims to better understand teacher feedback and assist EFL teachers in providing text-level written feedback on student writing more successfully. Reports, conference papers, and articles based on my dissertation may be published in the future.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**
You have been invited to participate in this study because you have very similar backgrounds with the prospective participants in my research and can provide crucial information for this research.

**What will happen in this research?**
The duration of this study is 18 weeks (one semester). In the first week of the semester, you will be asked to take part in an interview to introduce your feedback beliefs and strategies, etc.. In addition, you will receive training on how to verbalize what you are thinking while

you are writing comments on student writing (i.e., training on how to carry out think-aloud protocol). During the semester, you will be asked to do think aloud when giving feedback on English compositions of three students. For your convenience, you will record your think-aloud on your own. Each time after you finish these tasks, you will be interviewed to answer some questions concerning the processes you went through when providing feedback at the level of text. For ease and accuracy of data collection, all interviews will be tape-recorded and I may take field notes during the interviews.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**
There will be no known or foreseen risk at all and I do not expect that you will feel any form of discomfort. If you do, please feel free to discuss any issue with me.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**
If you feel uncomfortable when being interviewed or trained or when doing think-aloud, you can decline to answer any question or stop the activity at any time you feel so. Because of it, you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

**What are the benefits?**
The results of the study will lead to a better understanding of teacher feedback and new insights into the process of provision and interpretation of text-level feedback, an area which has not received much attention in research literature to date. Participation in the study can provide you with a chance to reflect on your teaching of writing, written feedback practices in particular, and help you make better pedagogical choices when you respond to student writing in future. Moreover, I am more than happy to share the results of the study with you once I have assembled the information and get it reported.

**How will my privacy be protected?**
Protecting your privacy is extremely important to me. The results of this study may be presented at professional conferences and in my dissertation and articles. In any reports of this research, confidentiality will be maintained and there will be no mention of your name or the name of the school you work with. You will choose or be given a pseudonym you prefer in order to track all your data. Moreover, all data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a secured office at AUT University to prevent access by unauthorized personnel. All recordings and other data with your information on them will be destroyed within six years. Nevertheless, due to the small number of involved, to ensure that the study does not in any way compromise you, I will give the data I transcribe and data analysis I make to you to read so that you can specify the parts you do not want to include in my final report.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**
Participating in this research will take you time. Initially, you need to spend about 30 minutes taking a background interview. Then, you need to spend 30 minutes receiving training on how to do think-aloud. In the following weeks, you need to spend more or less 18 hours doing think-aloud concerning commenting on three pieces of writing of four students. The on-going interviews over the course of a semester will take you about 2 hours each time. Each time after I finish transcribing and analysing the verbal reports and interviews, I will also need to send the hard copies of the transcripts and data analysis to you for verification. Your willingness to share your time is greatly appreciated.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**
You will have 15 days to think whether you want to participate in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, which means you are free to choose to participate in the study.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**
If you do decide to participate, you need to complete a consent form at first. If at any point you wish to withdraw from the study, you just need to inform me directly by email or by

letter. Upon your written request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**
Feedback or a summary of findings can be distributed to you if you choose. Check the appropriate box on the consent form and then I will share with you the results of the research by email or by post.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project could be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Prof. John Bitchener, *john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz*, *+64 921 9999 extn.7830*.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research could be notified to the Executive Manager, AUTEC, Kate O'Connor*, ethics@aut.ac.nz,* *+64 921 9999 extn.6038*.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**
Researcher Contact Details: Bian, Xiaoyun, ***cufebxy@163.com***
Project Supervisor Contact Details: Professor John Bitchener*, **john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz***, ***+64 921 9999 extn.7830***

# 研究项目教师须知

**制定日期：** 2015 年 1 月 10 日
**项目名称：** 中国大学外语教师说明文语篇反馈研究：过程视角
**研究者：** 卞晓云　　　　　　　　**邮件地址：** *cufebxy@163.com*

**邀请：**

您知道，我是卞晓云，目前正在奥克兰理工大学 John Bitchener 教授指导下进行应用语言学领域的博士研究。现在，我诚挚邀请您参加我的博士研究项目。该研究为在自然状态下（非实验状态下）进行的、为期一个学期的个案研究，计划在 2015-2016 学年的春季学期进行。我将考察中国大学英语教学环境下教师提供说明文语篇反馈和学生加工该反馈的这一过程，以及在此过程中师生沟通、学生写作能力的发展情况。此信息将帮助您了解我的研究目的和您作为参与者的权利。

作为您过去的同事，我知道您能为我的研究提供宝贵的数据，或者可以说您是否参与决定着这次研究的成败。但是，您是否参加本次研究完全自愿，同时您是否参与本次研究和学校对您的教学评估也毫无关联；如果您决定不参加，您也不会有任何损失；另外在参与过程中，您可以随时退出，这将不会给您带来任何不良影响，随之您提供的所有相关信息也将被销毁。

**研究目的：**

该研究的目的在于深入认识教师语篇反馈，从而帮助外语教师有效提高反馈效果。基于该研究项目，我将会完成博士论文，发表文章等。

**参与者：**

您受邀参加该研究的原因是因为您符合该研究设定的参与者的标准，能为本次研究提供丰富数据。

**参与活动：**

本研究将持续一个学期 18 周的时间。您将会在开学第一周接受我的采访，介绍您写反馈的原则和策略等等情况；同时，您还将会接受有声思维法这种口头汇报法的培训，我将向您示范在写反馈时怎样完成有声思维任务；然后在您对学生提供反馈时您需自己完成有声思维的录音工作；每次完成有声思维后，我还需请您接受我的采访，回答一些和提供反馈相关的问题。为了保证数据的准确性和使用方便，所有采访都会被录音，在采访过程中可能我还要做些笔记。

**参与意义：**

该研究收集的数据将为外语教师进行反馈，特别是语篇方面的反馈提供深入认识、深入理解的机会，同时也会为您的外语写作教学提供新的认识。

**参与要求：**

开学第一周，您需要花 30 分钟左右参加关于教师背景的采访、需花 30 分钟左右参加有声思维法培训；在学期过程里，您需花 18 小时左右完成有声思维任务；在学期

中您还需参加 3 次访谈，每次采访将历时 2 个小时左右。在此非常感谢您为本次研究所做的付出。

**风险可能：**

　　　　该研究项目不会有任何风险，也不会让您感到不适。如果任何内容使您感到不适，您可以告诉我，或者退出该研究。退出将不会对您有任何不良影响。同时，此项研究承诺保护您的个人隐私，所有信息只有研究者和其导师能够获得，并且您所在学校名称和您的名字都不会以实名形式出现在最后报告中。在我的报告中，您可以选定或者由我根据您的喜好为您提供一个化名来标识您提供的信息。另外，所有数据都将会安全保存在 AUT 大学我导师的文件柜中，除我和导师外他人无法取得您所提供的数据。所有的相关数据保存六年后也将会被销毁。然而，由于该研究规模很小，为充分保证您的利益受到保护，在数据转写、翻译和分析完成之后，我会请您阅读相关材料，指认出您认为不合适出现在我的报告中的部分。

**参与决定：**

　　　　您将有 15 天的时间决定是否参与该研究项目。对于本研究的参与是完全自愿的。如果您不愿意参加，不会对您有任何不良影响；如果决定参加，您需要在参与同意书上签字。在参与过程中任何时候您改变主意，都可以以邮件或信件的方式通知我本人，随时退出该研究。

**问题联系人：**

　　　　如果您对该研究的性质有任何问题，可以联系我的导师 John Bitchener 教授。联系邮件地址：*john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz*，　联系电话：*+64 921 9999 转 7830*。

　　　　如果您对该项目的操作有任何问题，可以联系奥克兰理工大学伦理董事会的执行负责人 Kate O'Connor 女士，联系邮件地址为：*ethics@aut.ac.nz*，联系电话：*+64 921 9999 转 6038*。

**项目信息联系人：**

　　　　如果您对本研究有任何问题，请联系我：卞晓云，邮件地址：*cufebxy@163.com*。

## Participant Information Sheet to Student Participants

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**
January 10, 2015
**Project Title:**
*Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository argumentation (EA): A process-oriented perspective*

**An Invitation**
First please allow me to introduce myself briefly. My name is Bian, Xiaoyun, at present in the process of completing my Ph.D. degree under the supervision of Prof. John Bitchener in the school of Language and Culture at Auckland University of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. Now I cordially invite you to participate in my doctoral study. This study is a naturalistic case study of one-semester duration, which is expected to take place during the spring semester of the Chinese 2015-2016 academic year. I will investigate how argumentation-related feedback on expository writing (i.e., text-level feedback on organization, content, etc.) is given and processed in a Chinese university-level EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class context. This form will describe the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant in this study. Certainly, your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no prejudice against you, or penalty, or loss of benefits that you are entitled to receive. You also have the right to withdraw from participation at any time prior to the completion of data collection. Your grade or status will not be affected in any way from your decision to withdraw from the study. If you withdraw, all relevant information including recordings and transcripts, or parts thereof, which you have provided for this project will be destroyed.

**What is the purpose of this research?**
This research aims to better understand teacher feedback and assist EFL teachers in providing text-level written feedback on student writing more successfully. Reports, conference papers, articles and dissertation may be published in the future.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**
You have been invited to participate in this study because you have very similar backgrounds with the prospective participants in my research and can provide crucial information for this research.

**What will happen in this research?**
The duration of the pilot study is 18 weeks (one semester). In the first or second week of the semester, you will be asked to take part in an interview to show your education background, experience with English writing instruction, and attitude towards teacher feedback. In addition, you will receive training on how to verbalize what you are thinking while you are processing teacher feedback (i.e., training on how to carry out think aloud protocol). During the semester, you will be asked to do think-aloud tasks while processing teacher feedback. Over the course of the semester, you will also be interviewed individually to set forth your views concerning your processing of teacher feedback. For ease and accuracy of data

collection, all interviews will be tape-recorded, and I may take field notes during the interviews.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**
There will be no known or foreseen risk at all and I do not expect that you will feel any form of discomfort. If you do, please feel free to discuss any issue with me or your English teacher.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**
If you feel uncomfortable when being interviewed or trained or when doing think-aloud, you can decline to answer any question or ask me to stop the activity at any time you feel so. Because of it, you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

**What are the benefits?**
The results of the study will lead to a better understanding of teacher feedback and new insights into the process of provision and interpretation of text-level feedback, an area which has not received much attention in research literature to date. As the result of taking part in the study, you will be able to better use feedback from teachers and greatly improve your writing ability. Moreover, I am more than happy to share the results of the study with you once I have assembled the information and get it reported.

**How will my privacy be protected?**
Protecting your privacy is extremely important to me. The results of this study may be presented at professional conferences and in my dissertation and articles. In any reports of this research, confidentiality will be maintained and there will be no mention of your name or the name of the school where you study. Each participant will choose or be given a pseudonym you prefer in order to track all your data. There is no possibility that you will be identified in the final reports. Moreover, all data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a secured office at AUT University to prevent access by unauthorized personnel. All tapes and other data with your information on them will be destroyed within six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**
Participating in the study will take you time. Initially, you need to spend about 30 minutes taking a background interview. Then, you need to spend 30 minutes receiving training on how to do think-aloud and stimulated recall. In the following weeks, you need to spend more or less 5 hours doing think-aloud and stimulated recall. During the semester, three individual interviews will take you 3 hours at the maximum. For ease and accuracy of data collection, you need to allow me to record your think-aloud and stimulated recall and all interviews, take field notes during the interviews, and make copies of all of your writing assignments during the semester, including the teacher's comments and grades on them. Meanwhile, each time after I finish transcribing the verbal reports and interviews, I will also send the hard copies of the transcripts to you for verification. Your willingness to share your time is greatly appreciated.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**
You will have two days to think whether you want to participate in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, which means you are free to choose to participate in the study.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**
If you do decide to participate, you need to complete a consent form at first. If at any point you wish to withdraw from the study or have any questions, you just need to inform me directly by email or by letter. Upon your written request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Feedback or a summary of findings can be distributed to you if you choose. Check the appropriate box on the consent form and then I will share with you the results of the research by email or by post.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project could be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Prof. John Bitchener, *john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz*, *+64 921 9999 extn.7830*.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research could be notified to the Executive Manager, AUTEC, Kate O'Connor*, ethics@aut.ac.nz*, *+64 921 9999 extn.6038*.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**
Researcher contact details:
Bian, Xiaoyun, *__cufebxy@163.com__*

Project supervisor contact details:
Professor John Bitchener*, __john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz__*, *+64 921 9999 extn.7830*

# 研究项目学生须知

**制定日期：**2015 年 1 月 10 日
**项目名称：**中国大学外语教师说明文语篇反馈研究：过程视角
**研究者：**卞晓云　　　　　　　　**邮件地址：** *cufebxy@163.com*

**简介：**
　　首先请允许我简单介绍一下自己，我叫卞晓云，目前正在奥克兰理工大学 John Bitchener 教授指导下进行应用语言学领域的博士研究，我现诚挚邀请您参加我的博士研究项目。该研究为在自然状态下（非实验状态下）进行的、为期一个学期的一个个案研究，计划在 2015-2016 学年的春季学期进行。我将考察中国大学英语教学环境下教师提供说明文语篇反馈和学生加工该反馈的这一过程，以及在此过程中师生沟通和学生写作能力的发展情况。此信息将帮助您了解我的研究目的和您作为参与者的权利。当然，您是否参加本次研究完全自愿，同时是否参与本次研究和您的成绩也毫无关联；如果您决定不参加，您也不会有任何利益损失；另外在参与过程中，您可以随时退出，这将不会给您带来任何不良影响，随之您提供的所有相关信息也将被销毁。

**研究目的：**
　　该研究的目的在于深入认识教师反馈，从而帮助外语教师有效提高反馈效果。基于该研究项目，我将会完成博士论文，发表文章等。

**参与者：**
　　您受邀参加该研究的原因是因为您符合该研究设定的参与者的标准，能为本次研究提供丰富数据。

**参与活动：**
　　这次研究将持续一个学期 18 周的时间。您将会在开学第一周或者第二周接受我的采访，谈一下您对英语写作、教师反馈等等问题的看法；同时，您还将会接受有声思维法这一口头汇报法的培训，我将向您示范在加工教师反馈时怎样完成有声思维任务；然后在您加工教师反馈时我会对您的有声思维录音；另外，您还需接受一对一的采访，提出这一学期针对加工教师反馈过程您的看法。

**参与意义：**
　　该研究收集的数据将为外语教师对反馈，特别是语篇方面的反馈提供深入认识理解的机会，同时也将会对您英语写作能力、使用教师反馈能力的提高大有裨益。

**参与要求：**
　　在开学第一周或第二周，您需要花 30 分钟左右参加背景采访；需花 30 分钟左右参加有声思维法培训；在学期过程里，您需花 5 个小时左右完成有声思维任务；另外，采访需要占您 3 个小时左右的时间。所有采访和口头汇报将会被录音。在这个学

期里，您还需要同意我复印您在这一学期中所有作文，包括老师给您的反馈和成绩。在此非常感谢您为本次研究所做的付出。

## 风险可能：

该研究项目不会有任何风险，也不会让您感到不适。如果任何内容使您感到不适，您可以告诉我，或者退出该研究。退出将不会对您有任何不良影响。同时，此项研究承诺保护您的个人隐私，所有信息只有研究者和其导师能够获得，您的老师不会获得您所提供的原始信息。为保护个人隐私，您所在学校名称和您的名字都不会以实名形式出现在最后报告中。在我的报告中，您可以选定或者由我根据您的喜好为您提供一个化名来标识您所提供的信息，您不用担心会出现您的私人身份被曝光的可能。另外，所有数据都将会安全保存在 AUT 大学我导师的文件柜中，除我和导师外他人无法取得您所提供的数据。所有的相关数据保存六年后也将会被销毁。

## 参与决定：

您将有 2 天的时间决定是否参与该研究项目。对于本研究的参与是完全自愿的。如果您不愿意参加，不会对您有任何不良影响；如果决定参加，您需要在参与同意书上签字。在参与过程中的任何时候您改变主意，都可以告知我，随时退出该研究。

## 问题联系人：

如果您对该研究的性质有任何问题，可以联系我的导师 John Bitchener 教授。邮件地址：*john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz*，联系电话：*+64 921 9999 转 7830*。

如果您对该项目的操作有任何问题，可以联系奥克兰理工大学伦理董事会的执行负责人 Kate O'Connor 女士，邮件地址为：*ethics@aut.ac.nz*，联系电话：*+64 921 9999 转 6038*。

## 项目信息联系人：

如果您对本研究有任何问题，请联系我：卞晓云，邮件地址：*cufebxy@163.com*。

**Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms**



## Participant Consent Form to the Teacher Participant

**Project title:**
Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository argumentation (EA): A process-oriented perspective

**Project Supervisor**:  Prof. John Bitchener
**Researcher**:        Bian, Xiaoyun

○     I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 10 January, 2015.

○     I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○     I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews. I also understand that interviews and verbal reporting tasks will be audio-taped and transcribed.

○     I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to the completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○     If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○     I agree to take part in this research.

○      I agree not to mention any specific participant by name, if I happen to talk about this study with anyone.

○     I understand only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the recordings and they will always be kept confidential.

○     I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ...................................................……………………………

Date : ……………………..

Participant's name : .....................……………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

…………………………………………………………………………………..

# 参与同意书 (教师版)

**项目名称：**中国大学外语教师说明文语篇反馈研究：过程视角
**指导老师：**John Bitchener 教授
**研究者：**卞晓云

○　　我已阅读并了解了 2015 年 1 月 10 日制定的项目参与信息。

○　　我已得到询问相关问题的机会，并且问题也已经得到了解答。

○　　我已了解到采访及我的口头汇报会被录音和记录。

○　　我已了解在参与过程中我可以随时退出该项目，并撤出我提供的任何信息，这将不会对我有任何不良影响。

○　　我已了解如果我退出研究，我所提供的任何信息，包括录音等都会被销毁。

○　　我同意参加该研究，并许可将我所提供的信息用于外语教学研究。

○　　我同意在跟其他人谈到该研究的时候不会提及任何人的真实姓名。

○　　我已了解了只有研究者和其导师可以参阅我提供的信息，他们将对我提供的信息保密。

○　　我希望获得一份该项目的研究报告 (请选择)：　是○　否○

参与者签名: ...........................……………………………

日期 : ………………………

参与者姓名 : ...........................…………………………………………………

参与者联系方式 (可选):

………………………………………………………………………………..

## Participant Consent Form to Student Participants

**Project title:**
Chinese EFL teachers' written feedback on expository argumentation (EA): A process-oriented perspective

**Project Supervisor**: Prof. John Bitchener
**Researcher:**        Bian, Xiaoyun

○      I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 10 January, 2015.

○      I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○      I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews. I also understand that interviews and verbal reporting tasks will be audio-taped and transcribed.

○      I understand that all my writing assignments (including teacher comments and grades on them) produced for the study will be copied.

○      I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to the completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○      If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○      I agree to take part in this research and allow what I say and the information I provide in it to be used for the second language teaching and learning study.

○      I agree not to mention any specific participant by name, if I happen to talk about this study with anyone.

○      I understand only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the recordings and they will always be kept confidential.

○      I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○


Participant's signature: ....................................………………………………

Date : ……………………..


Participant's name : ....................…………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate): ……………………………………………………………………………………

# 参与同意书 （学生版）

**项目名称：** 中国大学外语教师说明文语篇反馈研究：过程视角
**指导老师：** John Bitchener 教授
**研究者：** 卞晓云

○ 我已阅读并了解了 2015 年 1 月 10 日制定的项目参与信息。

○ 我已得到询问相关问题的机会，并且问题也已经得到了解答。

○ 我已了解采访及口头汇报会被录音和记录。

○ 我已了解带有教师所给反馈和成绩的作文会被复制。

○ 我已了解在参与中我可以随时退出该项目，并撤出我提供的任何信息，这将不会对我有任何不良影响。

○ 我已了解如果我退出该研究，我所提供的任何信息，包括录音等都会被销毁。

○ 我同意参加该研究项目，并允许将我所提供的信息用于外语教学研究。

○ 我同意在跟其他人谈到该研究的时候不会提及任何人的真实姓名。

○ 我已了解只有研究者和其导师可以参阅我提供的信息，他们将对我提供的信息保密。

○ 我希望获得一份该项目的研究报告 (请选择)：    是○  否○

参与者签名: ………………………………..…………………………

日期 : ………………………..

参与者姓名 : ………………..……………………………………………………

参与者联系方式 (可选):

…………………………………………………………………………………..

**Appendix D: Interview Guide**



**Teacher Background Interview Guide**

Thank you for joining me today and agreeing to take this interview. First, let me remind you about the purpose of this interview. This interview aims to obtain information concerning your usual way of providing feedback at the level of text. It will take about half an hour. Throughout the interview process, if you don't understand the question that I ask, just tell me and then I'll explain. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All the information you provide is confidential. You and your school will not be identified in my final write-up for pseudonyms will be used in it. You can decline answering any question or stop participating at any time. There will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or any other negative consequence for it. During the interview, I will tape record our conversation and take notes in order to make sure I get everything you say correct.

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself and your experience of teaching English and writing?
2. Could you please talk about your plan, objectives, and approaches of teaching English and writing in this semester?
3. Could you please share with me your ideas about teacher feedback on student writing?
4. On which aspects of student writing do you think you usually write feedback? Why?
5. In this semester, on which aspects of student writing are you going to write feedback? Why?
6. Is it possible that you may make a change of feedback focus when writing comment on student writing this semester? If so, what might be the reasons and what changes might you make?
7. How do you usually write your feedback?
8. In this semester, how are you going to write your feedback? Why?
9. Is it possible that you may change your usual way of writing your feedback when actually writing feedback in this semester? If so, what changes might you make and what might be the reasons of the changes?
10. Could you please share with me your experience of teaching the three classes last semester?

Thank you very much for your time today and your support of this research project. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. If you happen to talk about this study with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific participant by name. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

# 教师背景信息采访引导问题

**此次采访将主要帮助我收集以下信息：您的反馈理念和策略。在采访过程中，如果您对所提问题有疑问可以随时告诉我，然后我会给您进一步做出解释。该次采访将进行 30 分钟左右，所有您在此期间提供的信息我会严格保密，并且在最终报告中我将使用化名来指称受采访人。采访过程中，对所有问题的回答无所谓对错，您也可以拒绝回答问题或者随时退出采访，您的拒绝或退出不会给您带来任何不良影响。**

1. 您可以简单介绍一下您自己和您的教学经历吗？
2. 您可以讲一下这学期您的英语和写作教学安排吗？
3. 您怎样理解教师反馈？
4. 通常您都会针对学生作文中的哪些方面进行反馈？为什么？
5. 这个学期您会针对学生作文中的哪些方面进行反馈？为什么？
6. 有没有这样的可能，当您在实际写反馈的时候所关注的重点和您刚才所说的不同？为什么？
7. 您通常都怎么来写反馈？
8. 这个学期您会怎么来写反馈？为什么？
9. 是否您会在实际写反馈的时候不用您认为您会用的方法？那有可能做什么样的变化？为什么？
10. 您能聊聊上学期教这三个班学生的情况吗？

**特别感谢您的参与。另外如果您碰巧和他人提及这次研究，请您不要提及任何人的真实姓名，谢谢！**

**Appendix E: Interview Guide**

**Student Background Interview Guide**

Thank you for joining me today and agreeing to take this interview. First, let me remind you about the purpose of this interview. This interview aims to obtain information concerning your experience of processing of teacher feedback at the level of text. The interview will take about 30 minutes. Throughout the interview process, if you don't understand the question that I ask, just tell me and then I'll explain. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All the information you provide is confidential. You and your school will not be identified in my final write-up for pseudonyms will be used in it. You can decline answering any question or stop participating at any time. There will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or any other negative consequence for it. During the interview, I will tape record our conversation and take notes in order to make sure I get everything you say correct.

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself and your experience of taking English and English writing classes?
2. How do you evaluate yourself as an English learner and your ability to write in English? Why?
3. What do you think of writing in English and in Chinese?
4. Questions concerning feedback processing (to be asked one by one): Did you get feedback from teachers on your writing before? If yes, what did the written feedback focus on (content, organization, style, grammar, etc.)? How did your teachers write feedback? Did you usually read teacher feedback carefully? How did you read teacher feedback? For what purpose did you read teacher feedback? Did you take some actions to incorporate teacher feedback? When reading feedback, did you also consider how to use teacher feedback? To what extent do you usually base on teacher feedback to take action? Which type of feedback do you usually take and act on it? What actions do you usually take?
5. In this semester, will you respond to teacher feedback in the same way? If so, why? If not, how might you respond to teacher feedback?
6. Could you please share with me your ideas about teacher feedback?
7. Could you please share with me your experience of taking English class last semester?

Thank you very much for your time today and your support of this research project. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. If you talk about this interview with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific participant by name. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## 学生背景信息采访引导问题

**此次采访将帮助我收集关于您以往加工教师语篇反馈相关的数据。在采访过程中，如果您对所提问题有疑问可以随时告诉我，然后我会给您进一步做出解释。该次采访将进行 30 分钟左右，所有您在此提供的信息我会严格保密，并且在最终报告中使用化名来指称受才放人。采访过程中，对所有问题的回答无所谓对错，您也可以拒绝回答问题或者随时退出采访，您的拒绝或退出不会给您带来任何不良影响。**

1. 您能简单介绍一下自己和以往上英语课的经历吗？（比如：课上写过多少作文？写哪类的作文？老师教写作的时候着重点是什么（内容、结构还是语法等等）？）
2. 您怎样评价您的英语水平和写作水平？
3. 您对英、汉语写作怎么看？
4. 以前老师给您的作文写过反馈吗？如果有，老师主要针对什么问题写反馈的呢（内容、结构、语法还是什么）？老师怎么写的反馈呢？您通常会很认真地看老师写的反馈吗？您怎么读老师写的反馈的呢？您出于什么目的读老师的反馈呢？您通常在读反馈的基础上怎么处理老师反馈呢？您在读老师反馈的时候会想着如何做修改吗？以往您在多大程度上会按老师反馈里说的来做修改呢？您会遵照哪类反馈采取下一步行动呢？
5. 这学期，您还是会这样来处理老师反馈吗？如果是/不是，为什么？
6. 您能再给我解释一下您是怎么理解老师反馈这个概念的吗？
7. 您能跟我分享一下上个学期英语课的情况吗？

**特别感谢您的参与。另外如果您偶然和他人提及这次研究，请您不要提及任何人的真实姓名，谢谢！**

# Appendix F: Think-aloud Protocol in the Training Session

**Think-Aloud Protocol in the Training Session**
**(Based on procedures proposed by Bowles in 2010)**

1. Describing what is meant by think-aloud. Think-aloud is "a type of research method in which learners verbalize their thoughts as they perform an activity" (Loewen & Reinders, 2011, p. 166). Its purpose is to "provide insight into the cognitive processes that learners experience when performing a task in question" (Loewen & Reinders, 2011, p. 166). In think-aloud tasks, the researcher wants the participants to say out loud everything that they would say to themselves silently while working on a problem. When thinking aloud, participants do not need to explain or justify their thoughts.

2. Specifying participants can use the language that occurs in their mind to verbalize their thoughts. By using their first language---Chinese, participants can communicate their thoughts more effectively. Meanwhile, participants will be told that it would be fine for them to use English when necessary as they think aloud.

3. Demonstrating how to do think-aloud for each participant. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), there is a caution to be alerted to when modelling how to think aloud. That is, the researchers need to use a similar, or a completely different task (rather than the same target task) when demonstrating how to think aloud. Otherwise, it is possible that the learners will use the strategies that the researchers have used when the researchers model think-aloud for the learners. In this study, a similar task is to be used because "learners may be able to go from the practice verbalization to the operational study more easily" (Bowles, 2009, p. 117). I will follow Wang and Wen's (2002) way of instructing Chinese EFL student writers to do think-aloud. 1) When modelling for the student participant, I will give a demonstration of thinking aloud while reading a student's English writing produced by one of my former students. Then the student participant will be asked to think aloud while reading the feedback I provided on a piece of English writing by one of my former students. The participant will be told to vocalize every single thought and use the language that occurs in his/her mind. When the student finishes the task, I will ask him/her to estimate his/her difficulty with the think-aloud method. I will also make further explanation to the student participant concerning the difficulties I find he/she has during he/she practices think-aloud. 2) When modelling for the teacher participant, I will give a demonstration of thinking aloud while reading the comments I wrote on a piece of writing produced by one of my former students. Then the teacher participant will be asked to think aloud while writing feedback on a piece of English writing by one of my former students. She will be told to vocalize every single thought and use the language that occurs in her mind. When she finishes the task, I will ask her to estimate her difficulty with the think-aloud method. I will also make further explanation to the teacher participant concerning the difficulties I find she has during she practices think-aloud.

4. Answering the participants' questions concerning think-aloud to ensure that he/she is familiar enough and at ease with think-aloud protocols.

**Appendix G: Interview Guide**

**Teacher Retrospective and Ongoing Interviews Guide**

Thank you for joining me today and agreeing to take this interview. First, let me remind you about the purpose of this interview. This interview aims to obtain information concerning your processing of teacher feedback at the level of text. The interview will take about less than 1 hour. Throughout the interview process, if you don't understand the question that I ask, just tell me and then I'll explain. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All the information you provide is confidential. You and your school will not be identified in my final write-up for pseudonyms will be used in it. You can decline answering any question or stop participating at any time. There will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or any other negative consequence for it. During the interview, I will tape record our conversation and take notes in order to make sure I get everything you say correct.

1. Before providing feedback this time, on what did you plan to write feedback for her? Why?
2. On what did you write feedback for her eventually? Why did you focus on each of these aspects?
3. Before providing feedback this time, did you have any plan as to how to write feedback for her? Why?
4. How did you write each feedback for her eventually? Why?
5. What were you thinking when you wrote down this piece of teacher comment (the one indicated by the interviewer)?
6. Do you think this piece of teacher comment (the one indicated by the interviewer) is readily understandable and acceptable? Why do you think so?
7. Concerning each problem pointed out in your text-level feedback, do you think the student can deal with it independently next time? Why do you think so?
8. Do you think the students are better able to deal with feedback next time? Why do you think so?
9. What do you think of your communication with your students through your feedback? Why do you think so?

Thank you very much for your time today and your support of this research project. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. If you talk about this with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific participant by name. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## 教师回顾和过程中采访引导问题

**此次采访将帮助我收集您提供语篇反馈相关的数据。在采访过程中，如果您对所提问题有疑问可以随时告诉我，然后我会给您进一步做出解释。该次采访将进行 60-90 分钟左右，所有您在此提供的信息我会严格保密，并且在最终报告中我将使用化名来指称您。采访过程中，对所有问题的回答无所谓对错，您也可以拒绝回答问题或者随时退出采访，您的拒绝或退出不会给您带来任何不良影响。**

1. 这次写反馈之前，你打算针对哪些方面提供反馈？为什么有这样的打算？
2. 实际上最后你在哪些方面提供了反馈？为什么会聚焦这些方面？
3. 这次写反馈之前，你打算如何写出反馈呢？为什么有如此打算？
4. 实际上最后你怎么写了反馈？为什么这样写的呢？
5. 您能回顾一下您写这个反馈时（采访人所指出的各个反馈），当时的思维过程吗？
6. 您认为自己所给的这个反馈（采访人所指出的各个反馈）是否易懂和易接受？为什么会这么认为？
7. 对于在内容结构反馈里提到的问题，您觉得学生下次写作时能不能处理好？为什么这么认为？
8. 您觉得学生下次能更好地处理内容结构方面的反馈？为什么？
9. 您怎么看这次和学生的反馈交流情况？为什么这么认为？

**特别感谢您的参与。另外如果您偶然和他人提及这次研究，请您不要提及任何人的真实姓名，谢谢！**

**Appendix H: Interview Guide**

**Student Retrospective and Ongoing Interviews Guide**

Thank you for joining me today and agreeing to take this interview. First, let me remind you about the purpose of this interview. This interview aims to obtain information concerning your processing of teacher feedback at the level of text. The interview will take about less than 1 hour. Throughout the interview process, if you don't understand the question that I ask, just tell me and then I'll explain. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All the information you provide is confidential. You and your school will not be identified in my final write-up for pseudonyms will be used in it. You can decline answering any question or stop participating at any time. There will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or any other negative consequence for it. During the interview, I will tape record our conversation and take notes in order to make sure I get everything you say correct.

1. For what purpose did you read your teacher's feedback on your writing this time? Why?
2. To what extent do you think you understood and accepted teacher feedback this time?
3. What were you thinking when you interpreted this piece of teacher comment (the one indicated by the interviewer)?
4. Concerning this piece of teacher feedback (the one indicated by the interviewer), do you think you understood and accepted it? Why do you think so? If you accepted this piece of teacher feedback, did you consider how to act on it? For example, did you consider how to revise it in mind? Why do you think so?
5. Concerning the problem addressed by this feedback (the one indicated by the interviewer), do you think you can better deal with it when writing new essays? Why do you think so?
6. Do you think you are better able to deal with teacher feedback next time? Why do you think so?
7. What do you think of your communication with your teacher through feedback this time? Why do you think so?

Thank you very much for your time today and support of this research project. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. If you talk about this with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific participant by name. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## 学生回顾和过程中采访引导问题

**此次采访将帮助我收集与您加工教师语篇反馈过程相关的数据。在采访过程中，如果您对所提问题有疑问可以随时告诉我，然后我会给您进一步做出解释。该次采访将进行 30-60 分钟，所有您在此提供的信息我会严格保密，并且在最终报告中我将使用化名来指称您。采访过程中，对所有问题的回答无所谓对错，您也可以拒绝回答问题或者随时退出采访，您的拒绝或退出不会给您带来任何不良影响。**

1. 这次您读老师反馈的目的是什么？为什么有此目的？
2. 您认为这次你多大程度上理解并接受了老师的反馈呢？
3. 您能回顾一下您解读这个反馈时（采访人所指出的各个反馈），当时的思维过程吗？
4. 当您解读这个反馈时（采访人所指出的各个反馈），您是否理解并接受了老师的这个反馈呢？如果是，为什么呢？您觉得接受了这个反馈时，是否进一步又做了些什么？比如，当时您读的时候是否考虑到如何做修改呢？为什么呢？
5. 针对老师这次指出的语篇方面的问题，您认为在写新作文的时候能处理地更好吗？为什么会这样认为？
6. 你认为下次你能处理地非常好地处理反馈吗？为什么会这样认为？
7. 您怎么看这次和老师的反馈交流情况？为什么会这么认为？

**特别感谢您的参与。另外，如果您偶然和他人提及这次研究，请您不要提及任何人的真实姓名，谢谢！**

## Appendix I: Interview Guide

**AUT UNIVERSITY**
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

### Teacher/Student Final Interview Guide

Thank you for joining me today and agreeing to take this interview. First, let me remind you about the purpose of this interview. This interview aims to obtain information concerning your views about the feedback sessions in this semester. The interview will take about less than 1 hour. Throughout the interview process, if you don't understand the question that I ask, just tell me and then I'll explain. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All the information you provide is confidential. You and your school will not be identified in my final write-up for pseudonyms will be used in it. You can decline answering any question or stop participating at any time. There will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or any other negative consequence for it. During the interview, I will tape record our conversation and take notes in order to make sure I get everything you say correct.

1. What do you think of your communication with your students/teacher through feedback in a semester? Why do you think so?
2. Do you think that your students/you are better able to deal with teacher feedback now? Why do you think so?
3. Do you think that teacher feedback on each of the text-level issues helpful? Why do you think so?
4. Do you think that teacher feedback on positive and direct, negative feedback are helpful? Why do you think so?

Thank you very much for your time today and support of this research project. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. If you talk about this with anyone, please remember not to mention any specific participant by name. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

# 教师、学生最终采访引导问题

此次采访将帮助我了解您对这个学期师生处理反馈这个过程的看法。在采访过程中，如果您对所提问题有疑问可以随时告诉我，然后我会给您进一步做出解释。该次采访将进行 **30-60 分钟**，所有您在此提供的信息我会严格保密，并且在最终报告中我将使用化名来指称您。采访过程中，对所有问题的回答无所谓对错，您也可以拒绝回答问题或者随时退出采访，您的拒绝或退出不会给您带来任何不良影响。

1. 您怎么看这学期您和学生/老师的反馈交流情况？为什么会这么认为？
2. 您认为现在学生/您能非常好地处理反馈了吗？为什么会这样认为？
3. 您认为老师给出的各个语篇方面相关的反馈有帮助吗？有多大帮助？为什么会这样认为？
4. 您觉得积极评价和直接负面评价有帮助吗？为什么会这样认为？

**特别感谢您的参与。另外，如果您偶然和他人提及这次研究，请您不要提及任何人的真实姓名，谢谢！**

# Appendix J: Codebook

**Labelling think-aloud data from Teacher T
(Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Codes)**

**Theme 1: Teacher involvement**
 **Category: Behavioural involvement**
  feedback-typing operations
   type in feedback
   type in added/edited feedback
  help-seeking operations
   consult online dictionary/resources
   consult materials (e.g., model writing)
 **Category: Affective involvement**
  articulate affective response to student writing (e.g., (dis)satisfied, pleasant)
  articulate feelings aroused by feedback-writing (e.g., anguished)
  articulate (dis)satisfaction with comments provided on student writing (satisfied and dissatisfied)
 **Category: Cognitive decision-making involvement**
  planning and metacognitive operations
   articulate focus
   articulate delivery approaches
   articulate control of emotions
  interpretation operations
   read student writing (overall, overall introduction, local-level issues in the paragraph of introduction, overall body paragraph, local-level issues in the paragraph, overall conclusion)
   interpret student writing (e.g., identify the student's writing intention)
  evaluation operations
   point out strengths
   point out problems
   evaluate student writing
   evaluate student writing process
   evaluate student ability
   evaluate student writing attitude
   evaluate student efforts
   evaluate students' acceptance of and affective reactions to EA feedback
   students' application of classroom instruction to writing
   evaluate student improvement
   consider plagiarism
   compare writing (cross-student comparison, cross-writing comparison)
  identification and selection operations

identify how to phrase comments in English
identify what to write
identify how to revise student writing
identify how to express feedback in English
select lexis, sentence stems, language expressions, use of symbols,
feedback style (direct/indirect) and feedback positions

review operations
read student writing
review student writing
read comments provided on student writing
review comments provided on student writing
consider instruction purposes via feedback
*articulate (dis)satisfaction with comments provided*
consider student reactions to teacher feedback (e.g., understanding of
feedback, incorporation of feedback)
consider the improvement of the teacher-provided revisions
consider plagiarism
evaluate student ability
evaluate student efforts
compare student writing

reflection operations
how to deliver feedback
consider what to teach in class
consider student problems with dealing EA issues and the causes
consider student progress in argumentation and the causes
reflect on feedback purposes
reflect on the effective feedback delivery approaches (e.g.,
confirmation of student strengths and progress)
reflect on student affect, student acceptance of teacher feedback, and
student application of classroom instruction concerning EA issues

**Category: Interaction among affective, cognitive and behavioural involvement**

**Theme 2: Factors influencing teacher decision-making**
**Category: Teacher factors**
**Category: Contextual factors**

# Appendix K: Codebook

**Labelling think-aloud data from Students A, B, and C**
**(Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Codes)**

## Student A

**Theme 1: Student engagement**
    **Category: Behavioural engagement**
        seek online materials for help
        take notes
        make revision
        memorize/make mental note of the key points in teacher feedback (e.g., feedback on connectives)
        mark the key points
    **Category: Affective engagement**
        articulate affective evaluation of teacher feedback
        articulate affective evaluation of self-written text
        articulate emotional feelings aroused by responding to teacher feedback
        articulate difficulty in making revision
    **Category: Cognitive engagement**
        reading operations
            scan self-written text
            read self-written text
            read teacher comment
        processing operations (process self-written text)
            identify key issues of self-written text
            evaluate self-written text
            review self-written text
            (re-)identify key issues of self-written text
            articulate confidence in writing cohesively and coherently
            consider writing process
        evaluation operations (evaluate teacher feedback)
            articulate questions about teacher feedback
            articulate preference for teacher feedback
            compare self-written text and teacher revision
            articulate expectation for teacher feedback
            articulate agreement with teacher feedback
            articulate disagreement with the negative part
            articulate inspiration of other feedback
            evaluate teacher attitude
            evaluate teacher understanding of self-written text
        justification operations
            justify self-written text
            re-justify self-written text
        analysis operations
            interpret advice as negative feedback

translate teacher feedback into L1
reinterpret teacher feedback
identify explanation and advice as acceptable feedback points
identify key points of explanation
identify the problem indicated in feedback
identify the "how" and "why" of feedback, suggestions, and revisions
identify foci of teacher feedback
justify teacher feedback

incorporation decisions
consider how to write in new composition
summarize key points of teacher feedback
consider how to revise

review operations
read self-written text
interpret self-written text
identify key issues and strengths of self-written text
reinterpret self-written text
reinterpret teacher feedback
evaluate self-interpretation of feedback
go through the most important teacher feedback

metacognitive operations

# Student B

**Category: Behavioural engagement**
take notes
mark key points in teacher feedback
memorize/make mental of key points in teacher feedback

**Category: Affective engagement**
articulate emotional feelings aroused by teacher feedback
articulate affective evaluation of self-written texts
articulate affective evaluation of teacher feedback
articulate positive attitude towards revision
consider teacher revision meaningless
acknowledge appreciation of teacher feedback

**Category: Cognitive engagement**
reading operations
read self-written text
read teacher feedback
scan self-written text

evaluation operations (evaluate teacher feedback)
acknowledge notice of teacher feedback
articulate questions about teacher feedback
compare self-written text and teacher revision
articulate agreement with teacher feedback
articulate disagreement with the negative part of feedback
acknowledge knowledge gaps
make connections between feedback

analysis operations (analyse teacher feedback)
interpret advice as vocabulary problem
interpret revision from language perspective
self-identify writing problems
interpret revision from register perspective
interpret revision as language problems
make connection with in-class instruction

                acknowledge inability to understand teacher feedback
                consider writing process
        justification operations
                justify self-written text
                re-justify self-written text
        incorporation decisions
                articulate summarization
        review operations
                re-read self-written text
                re-read teacher feedback
                re-interpret teacher feedback
                re-justify self-written text
                evaluate self-written text
                self-identify writing problems
        metacognitive operations

# Student C

**Category: Behavioural engagement**
        consult dictionaries installed in mobile phone
        take notes
        make revision
        memorize/make mental note of the key points in teacher feedback
        mark the key points in teacher feedback
**Category: Affective engagement**
        articulate emotional feelings aroused by responding to teacher feedback
        articulate affective evaluation of self-written texts
        articulate affective evaluation of teacher feedback
        articulate appreciation of teacher feedback
        articulate trust of teacher
**Category: Cognitive engagement**
        reading operations
                scan self-written text
                read self-written text
                read teacher feedback
        processing operations self-written text (process self-written text)
                identify problem of self-written text
                evaluate self-written text
              consider reasons for writing strengths
        evaluation operations
                interpret teacher feedback from the teacher perspective
                articulate questions about teacher feedback
                articulate agreement with teacher feedback
                interpret teacher feedback as problem indication
                compare revision with self-written text
                acknowledge notice of teacher feedback
                evaluate teacher feedback
                evaluate teacher understanding of written text
                articulate notice of positive feedback
        justification operations
                justify self-written text
                re-justify self-written text
        analysis operations (analyse teacher feedback)
                identify the "why" of teacher feedback
                identify the "why" of positive teacher feedback
                identify the "how" of teacher revision

     identify the "what" of teacher feedback
     identify the exact meaning of EA feedback
     identify the writing problem
     identify connection between feedback
     identify the implication of teacher feedback
incorporation decisions
     consider how to revise
     summarize key points in teacher feedback
review operations
     identify writing problems
     re-interpret EA feedback
metacognitive operations

**Category: Interaction among affective, cognitive and behavioural involvement**

**Theme 2: Factors influencing student decision-making**
  **Category: Student factors**
  **Category: Contextual factors**

# Appendix L: Student Writing with Teacher comments



**Student Writing with Teacher Comments
(A Sample in Original Version)**

The Campus Activity that benefits the most

Our lives at college cannot be colourful unless we gets rid of boring courses<mark>(写作中尽量避免消极的评论，尽量传递积极信息 your writing could reflect your state of mind or life attitude, and your writing would influence the reader)</mark> and take an active part in various activities, and among these different activities, social practice benefits the most.(this opening could get straight to the point, but not very attractive. Try this: Campus activities play an indispensable and active part in the college life. Among these various activities, social practice benefits me the most.是否更加简洁些☺ )

There are lots of reasons contributing to the <mark>trend</mark> that joining in social practice play increasingly crucial role in a student's life. (在段落之间有这样一个承上启下的主题句是非常必要的☺建议这一段与下面两端合并为第二段，主要讨论的是原因。结构会更清楚些。另外这句话表述有些不清楚，可以改为 Social practice plays an increasingly significant role in students' life and several reason contribute to that. )

Be involved in social practice found a platform for us to communicate and cooperate with others. （It's good to have a clearly expressed opinion as a sub-topic sentence。另外这句话可以再简洁些，改为 **The involvement in** social practice **provides** a platform for communication and cooperation with others.）We can obtain different friendships in the process. With different ideas and talents, the valuable experience makes us open-minded, flexible and easy-going, being a landmark during our growth. （就这一部分而言，开头第一句话表达明确，即-可以提供给我们交流和合作的平台，之后的句子应该围绕这层意思进一步展开，做到连贯性。The following sentences should provide details to further explain or illustrate about how or why it helps to communicate or cooperate. But, your following sentences fail to do that. Instead, you gives not that coherent ideas.）

There is no doubt that social practice can enhance our sense of responsibility and confidence, and a success practice after our efforts can give us a sense of achievement and pleasure, even a failure can still broaden our horizon and help us find what our weaknesses are and make a solid foundation for next trial. 这一部分论述的层次结构不清楚，是原因的罗列，没有进一步展开，建议只保留 2-3 个 causes 就可以，

再稍微展开写下。**建议结构如下：**

Social practice plays an increasingly significant role in students' life and several reason contribute to that.—主题句

Cause 1 The involvement in social practice provides a platform for communication and cooperation with others.---supporting sentences

Cause 2 There is no doubt that social practice can enhance our sense of responsibility and confidence.---supporting details

Cause 3 broaden our horizon—也可以不要

Considered the fact that our students' time at college is a period of translation to a world of work, it is necessary to make use of it to touch on some fields about what we are learning or interested. Inevitably, social practice can bring us meaningful experience and abundant knowledge which cannot be heard in the classroom. Now, as we know, many students, dreaming of having a bright career and promising future will find their hop from a classroom to a company or office delayed a bit, because many employers prefer those experienced employees who are full of knowledge about the work and ability to address practical issues. (这一段表述不清楚。貌似在说社会实践可以锻炼课堂学不到的实际应用能力，这也是今后工作所需要的能力。这一层意思仍然属于原因，作为结尾段不合适，应该归到第二部分。这层原因可以表述为：The social practice can improve the practical competence which cannot be provided in the classroom.仍需要写一个比较完整的结尾。)

1. Pay attention to the paragraph setting. Three paragraphs would be acceptable. Too many paragraphs would make the writing unclear and not well structured. 注意文章结构，建议采取传统的三段模式，本文段落太多。

2. Generally, the coherence of the writing is fine. The choice of words is pretty impressive, such as platform, flexible, Inevitably, landmark, etc☺

3. The general structure of the writing is not that sound since you need **a conclusion. A**lso pay attention to the logic and structure of each paragraph.

**Student Writing with Teacher Comments and Student-written Notes**
**(A Sample in Original Version)**

The Campus Activity that benefits the most

在英语中，好的结构往往可以引人入胜，比如好的反问句，反义疑问句，并不是在传递消极信息，而是欲扬先抑的感觉去描述好处

Our lives at college cannot be colourful unless we gets rid of boring courses(写作中尽量避免消极的评论，尽量传递积极信息 your writing could reflect your state of mind or life attitude, and your writing would influence the reader) and take an active part in various activities, and among these different activities, social practice benefits the most.(this opening could get straight to the point, but not very attractive. Try this: Campus activities play an indispensable and active part in the college life. Among these various activities, social practice benefits me the most.是否更加简洁些☺ )

There are lots of reasons contributing to the trend that joining in social practice play increasingly crucial role in a student's life. (在段落之间有这样一个承上启下的主题句是非常必要的☺建议这一段与下面两端合并为第二段，主要讨论的是原因。结构会更清楚些。另外这句话表述有些不清楚，可以改为 Social practice plays an increasingly significant role in students' life and several reason contribute to that. )
名词化的短语使用会显得很正式，也可以让多个句子合并在一个长句里，并且避免了好多动词出现在句子里吗，显得生硬。
Be involved in social practice found a platform for us to communicate and cooperate with others.
（It's good to have a clearly expressed opinion as a sub-topic sentence。另外这句话可以再简洁些，改为 **The involvement in** social practice **provides** a platform for communication and cooperation with others.）We can obtain different friendships in the process. 具体的展示遇到问题我们可以交流合作完成什么样的任务，when our peers meet obsWith different ideas and talents, the valuable experience makes us open-minded, flexible and easy-going, being a landmark during our growth. （就这一部分而言，开头第一句话表达明确，即-可以提供给我们交流和合作的平台，之后的句子应该围绕这层意思进一步展开，做到连贯性。The following sentences should provide details to further explain or illustrate about how or why it helps to communicate or cooperate. But, your following sentences fail to do that. Instead, you gives not that coherent ideas.）

There is no doubt that social practice can enhance our sense of responsibility and confidence, and a success practice after our efforts can give us a sense of achievement and pleasure , even a failure can still broaden our horizon and help us find what our weaknesses are and make a solid foundation for next trial. 这一部分论述的层次结构不清楚，是原因的罗列，没有进一步展开，建议只保留 2-3 个 causes 就可以，再稍微展开写下。**建议结构如下：**
Social practice plays an increasingly significant role in students' life and several reason contribute to that.—主题句
Cause 1 The involvement in social practice provides a platform for communication and

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cooperation with others.---supporting sentences

Cause 2 There is no doubt that social practice can enhance our sense of responsibility and confidence.---supporting details

Cause 3 broaden our horizon—也可以不要

Considered the fact that our students' time at college is a period of translation to a world of work, it is necessary to make use of it to touch on some fields about what we are learning or interested. Inevitably, social practice can bring us meaningful experience and abundant knowledge which cannot be heard in the classroom. Now, as we know, many students, dreaming of having a bright career and promising future will find their hop from a classroom to a company or office delayed a bit, because many employers prefer those experienced employees who are full of knowledge about the work and ability to address practical issues. (这一段表述不清楚。貌似在说社会实践可以锻炼课堂学不到的实际应用能力，这也是今后工作所需要的能力。这一层意思仍然属于原因，作为结尾段不合适，应该归到第二部分。这层原因可以表述为：The social practice can improve the practical competence which cannot be provided in the classroom.仍需要写一个比较完整的结尾。)

4. Pay attention to the paragraph setting. Three paragraphs would be acceptable. Too many paragraphs would make the writing unclear and not well structured. 注意文章结构，建议采取传统的三段模式，本文段落太多。

5. Generally, the coherence of the writing is fine. The choice of words is pretty impressive, such as platform, flexible, Inevitably, landmark, etc☺

6. The general structure of the writing is not that sound since you need **a conclusion. A**lso pay attention to the logic and structure of each paragraph.

主要问题  1.文章的结构，原因在构思时就要逻辑清晰，两三点不要有交叉，要独立，最好是多角度，有全面。总结，深化主题，最好用一些简洁有力的表达观点的句子，这样观点明确，

2.重中之重，段落内部的结构，主题句一出来，要跟有两三句支撑它的话起到细节补充的作用，从 how 和 why 的角度多考虑考虑，分成几个独立的句子来进一步论证，要真实有力

**Appendix N: Writing Prompts**

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## Writing Prompts

Below the three writing prompts are presented in the order in which they were written over the course of the semester.

1. **Writing assignment 1**
   Writing topic: The Campus Activity that Benefits the Most
   Directions: You should use the writing technique of **Cause-Effect** to illustrate your views. You can write about 250 words.
2. **Writing assignment 2**
   Writing topic: The importance of reading literature
   Directions: You should use **Examples** to support your views and you can write about 250 words.
3. **Writing assignment 3**
   Writing topic: How to reduce the campus waste
   Directions: You can use any writing techniques that we have ever discussed in class to support your views and you can write about 250 words.