

UAE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
TEACHERS' FEEDBACK ON THEIR WRITING

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Presented to the faculty of the American University of Sharjah  
College of Arts and Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by  
FATMAH AHMED HAMMOUDI  
B.A. 2000

Sharjah, UAE  
January 2007

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We approve the thesis of Fatmah Ahmed Hammoudi

Date of signature

---

Dr. Cindy Gunn  
Assistant Professor  
Thesis Advisor

---

Dr. Rodney Tyson  
Associate Professor  
Graduate Committee

---

Dr. Betty Lanteigne  
Assistant Professor  
Graduate Committee

---

Dr. Fatima Badry  
Program Director, MA TESOL

---

Dr. William H Heidcamp  
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

---

Dr. Robert Cook  
Director, Graduate Studies and Research

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# UAE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS' FEEDBACK ON THEIR WRITING

Fatima Al Hammoudi, Candidate for the Master of Arts Degree

American University of Sharjah, 2006

## ABSTRACT

For most teachers, marking students' papers and responding to their writing is a daunting and tedious task. It is also a practice that could carry potential dangers and requires careful consideration. However, feedback from teachers is one of the crucial aspects of the classroom writing process and one of the teachers' most important roles in writing instruction. It is, therefore, important to develop an awareness of the nature and the function of feedback so that both teachers and students play their roles effectively in the writing classroom. This study sheds light on the nature of UAE high school teachers' feedback to students' compositions and students' perceptions and expectations regarding this feedback. It also investigates the correlation between the nature of the teachers' feedback and students' motivation, attitudes, and perception of writing skill.

The main purpose of the study was to investigate high school students' perceptions of teachers' feedback on their writing. It seeks answers for the following questions: What kind of feedback do students think they get? Do they think they get enough and supportive feedback? Do they believe in the usefulness of teachers' feedback on writing? What do they do with the feedback they get? And what preferences might they have? To achieve the purpose of this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were extracted from multiple sources including surveys, interviews, and samples of students' papers. Results indicated that the majority of UAE high school students recognize the value of teachers' feedback in improving their learning and encouraging them to write; however, their comments implied that

the feedback they received is not as effective as it could be. Based on the results of this study, the nature of teachers' feedback did not seem to be as informative as it could be. Besides, the majority of students felt short-changed, as they believed that teachers do not provide enough supportive feedback on their writing.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks and appreciation to those patient souls who helped me accomplish this study. I would like first to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Cindy Gunn, for her incredible support, encouragement, guidance, and patience. I would like also to extend my thanks and appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Rodney Tyson and Dr. Betty Lanteigne, for their thoughtful comments and support. My deepest gratitude is also extended to Dr. Fatima Badry, Dr. Maher Bahloul, and Dr. Marina Dodigovic for their guidance and assistance throughout my MA TESOL endeavor. Thanks are also extended to my colleagues for being supportive and helpful. We were always there for each other and I will always appreciate the encouragement and goodwill we shared. Finally, special recognition goes out to my family for their support, encouragement, and patience during my pursuit of the MA TESOL program.

## DEDICATION

I owe it all to you. Without your love, care, support, and patience, it could be nothing.  
Thanks my dear father.

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In most of our government schools in the United Arab Emirates, writing is still perceived as language practice in which students apply and utilize all of the grammatical rules and vocabulary words they have learned or memorized. Perhaps the most common way of correcting students' work has been to return it to students with a great deal of underlining, crossing out, question marks, occasional ticks, and short comments. Students are supposed to take to heart all the mistakes pointed out, infer the reasoning behind the grade and the underlining, and be motivated to avoid these mistakes in their next writing task. Writing has become an unwelcome task for both teachers and students. Teachers always complain about the students' poor writing skills and their unwillingness to write. On the other hand, students are not motivated to write and believe that their attempts in writing will always result in a paper full of underlining, crossing out, and extensive grammar corrections. In spite of the crucial role that many researchers note about teachers' feedback, teachers in the UAE seem to be still unaware of its impact on students' writing development, motivation, and attitudes toward writing.

Students' poor writing skills have been one of the major and serious problems in the field of education here in the UAE. Alreyes (1996) highlights this problem and states that "most UAE students, at some point, are faced with the dilemma of writing in English" (p. 9). This problem becomes even more complicated and worse when those students leave the school to face the academic requirements of university. Teachers need to encourage students' attempts in writing in order to elevate and develop their writing skill. One way to do this is to provide meaningful, effective, and productive feedback. Unfortunately, most teachers are unaware of the important role their feedback could play in the process of teaching and learning writing. Therefore, I believe that investigating students' perceptions about feedback on writing may provide a chance to raise teachers' awareness to this important aspect of teaching writing. In addition, it might be useful for teachers of both L1 and L2 because it will encourage them to view feedback from the learners' perspective. Investigating

students' perceptions of the feedback they get on their writing may help us understand their problems and needs in the learning of writing.

#### Research Questions/Assumptions

“Teacher response to students writing is a vital, though, neglected aspect of L2 composition research” (Ferris, Pezone, and Tinti, 1997, p.155). Indeed, a lot has been written about the role of feedback in writing classrooms and its impact on students' writing skills and attitudes toward writing; however, most of it has been done in classes of native speakers. Relatively few studies have investigated the ability of teachers to provide productive and effective feedback in ESL writing classes, or even examined students' expectations and perceptions of this feedback in public high school setting. Most of the studies that have tackled this issue in ESL writing classrooms were mainly conducted at high educational levels like universities and colleges. This research is one of the few studies that address this issue in the Arabian Gulf and more particularly in the UAE high school educational context.

I believe that teachers' response to students' writing is important at all levels and in all instructional contexts. However, responding effectively to students' writing is “a skill that can elude even experienced teachers” (Ferris & Hedcock, 1998, p. 147). This skill can be improved with practice, training, and critical reflection. Therefore, this study may provide evidence of a need for teachers' training and preparation in this important, but neglected, area of teaching and assessing writing. I believe that this may help both teachers and students arrive at a consensus on the nature and the function of feedback. This study should speak to all writing teachers, regardless of the level they are teaching, and may heighten our awareness of how we respond to students' writing, driving us to interrogate and reflect on our response practices. Finally, this study may underline the importance of examining feedback as a part of the whole teaching and learning context and might call for the need of providing effective and productive feedback.

The research questions addressed through this study were the following:  
What type of feedback do UAE high school students think they get? Do they think they get enough and supportive feedback? Do they value feedback on writing? What

do they do with the feedback they receive? And what preference might they have regarding feedback on writing?

### The Educational Context of the Study

The study took place in government high schools in Fujairah, UAE. In general, the educational system in the UAE consists of three cycles: The primary, the preparatory, and the secondary cycles. The primary cycle is from grades one to six, while preparatory cycle is from grade seven to nine. As for the secondary cycle, it includes three grades which are grade 10, 11, and 12. Participants of this study were mainly from grades 11 and 12 in the secondary cycle. Students at these grades are divided into two sections, Art or Science, according to their preference. Students in the Art section study subjects like Geography, History, and Social Science, while students in the Science section focus on scientific subjects. English is a common subject in both sections. In fact, English is taught as a subject from grade one in the primary level. Students in high school take seven English classes per week, and each class lasts 45 minutes.

The currently adopted textbooks in both grades 11 and grade 12 are still the traditional series, *English for the Emirates*. However, this series has recently been replaced by the new ones, *UAE English Skills*, in grades seven, eight, and 10. The textbooks in grades 11 and 12 are made up of two parts: The Pupils' Book and the workbook. The Pupils' Book usually presents lessons that involve the four skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, while the Workbook has various exercises and activities usually consolidating or elaborating on Pupil's Book lessons. It is noteworthy that a big portion of the workbook activities are dedicated to grammar exercises.

A typical writing class seems to be dominated by the teaching of grammar and writing form, with little attention paid to the discourse features of writing. The topics the students write on are linked to the composition topics suggested in their textbook. Teachers usually respond to students' writing using a product oriented approach. Indeed, writing seems to be tested rather than taught. According to my experience as a high school teacher in the UAE, students might be asked to write one draft for the topic suggested in their workbook. Also, some teachers might ask students to rewrite

their papers after they have been marked and have those final drafts in their workbooks. When students receive the marked compositions, they usually correct the errors by re-writing either the whole composition or those sentences that contain the errors.

As for the writing examination, the writing section is a part of a comprehensive test that includes structure, reading, vocabulary, letter writing, functions, and essay writing. Students are required to write a descriptive composition on one of the topics related to the topics suggested in the textbook. There is no clear rubric for the composition marking; however, certain marks are allocated for grammar, spelling, and ideas. In the year 2006-2007, the Ministry of Education adopted the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA), to be administered to all grade 12 students. The Writing section in this exam consists of one writing task which is a descriptive text. Students are required to write about 100 to 200 words on the suggested topic which is usually not related to the textbooks' suggested writing tasks. The quality of students' writing is assessed in terms of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and content. It is worth noting that students should score a minimum of 150 points on the CEPA to be eligible for joining any bachelor's programme in the higher education institutions in the UAE.

### Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one has stated the purpose of the study as well as the research questions. Also, it has formed the context and has provided a general overview of current writing assessment and instructions in UAE high public schools. A review of the literature is provided in chapter two. It provides a definition of feedback on writing and reviews its types and ways in which teachers can provide feedback to students on their writing. In addition, it highlights the need for effective feedback on students' writing and stresses its importance in teaching and learning writing. Besides, it sheds light on error correction as a typical type of feedback given on students' compositions here in UAE schools. This chapter also reviews aspects of the literature pertaining to students' perceptions, attitudes, and preferences regarding teachers' feedback.

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the participants, giving the number of the participants, the age, the grade, the school name, and some other important data. Also, it describes the instruments and the procedures followed to conduct the surveys and the interviews. Chapter four focuses on the findings which were obtained from the instruments used in the study: surveys, sample papers, and interviews. The data gathered from these sources are analyzed and categorized into five sections: first, the nature of teachers' feedback; second, students' perceptions of the usefulness of teachers' feedback; third, students' perceptions of error corrections as feedback to their writing; fourth, students' reactions and attention regarding written feedback; and fifth, students' preferences and expectations regarding feedback on writing. In the final chapter, the conclusion with the findings are summarized and implications for supervisors and teachers are provided.

There are four main appendices. Appendix A provides the students survey used in this study, followed by the translated version of the same survey in Appendix B. Appendix C presents a descriptive statistical analysis of the survey questions and statements, while Appendix D provides samples of students' papers that were used as a supportive instrument tool beside the survey and the interview data.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will attempt first to define the term “feedback” pertaining to writing classes. It will also review the types and the ways in which teachers can provide feedback to students on their writing. In addition, it will tackle the importance of teachers' feedback on students' writing, and its significant relation to students' motivation, attitudes, self-esteem, and writing apprehension. Moreover, it will shed light on error correction as a main type of feedback. Finally, some aspects of the literature pertaining to students' attitudes and perceptions regarding teachers' feedback and its effect on their writing enhancement will be reviewed.

#### What Is Feedback?

Although a lot of researchers have tackled the issue of feedback on students' writing and the significant role it can play in second language writing, only a few of them define the term feedback in writing classes. In its broader meaning, the concept “feedback” has been defined as “the term [that] originates in biology and refers to the message that comes back to an organism that has acted on its environment” (Rinvoluceri, 1994, p. 287). In biology, this term describes the chain of actions and reactions. In second language writing, feedback is one of the fundamental elements of the process approach to writing. According to Keh (1990), it can be defined as the “input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision” (p. 294). In other words, it is the teacher's reaction or response to students' writing. To illustrate, it is the comments, questions, corrections, and suggestions the teacher gives to the students in order to produce “reader-based prose” instead of “writer-based prose” (p. 294).

According to MacDonald (1991), the term feedback refers to “the process of providing some commentary on students' work in which a teacher reacts to the ideas in print, assesses a student's strengths and weakness, and suggests directions for improvement” (p. 33). This feedback is normally written on blank spaces on students' compositions or spoken about with students in short conferences. Traditionally, written feedback is “episodic,” as noted by MacDonald (1991). That is, students receive it on formal occasions when their teachers return their graded essays.

However, more recently feedback, both written and oral, is integrated in the writing process. That is, students receive it as they are working on their compositions. On the other hand, Fines (2003) defines appropriate feedback as the “positive reinforcement for successful work and judicious criticism for mistakes.” He claims that teachers of “writing typically know the careful balance of praise, criticism, and sensitivity to student confidence levels required to coach students to higher achievement in their writing” (para. 76). With regard to positive reinforcement, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1999) note that a balance between criticism and praise may be the best means of encouraging quality writing” (p. 174).

### Types of Feedback on Writing

Feedback on writing could be presented in different ways. For example, teachers may respond to students’ writing in a form of oral conferences or as written comments. Feedback on writing may also include peer or group feedback, as well as creative methods such as taped commentaries and computer based feedback such as the comments inserted in a word processing file or sent via email (Ferris 2004; Hyland, 1990). Although all of these alternative feedback techniques have their advantages and appeal, the availability of the technology and its convenience can be the deciding issues for many teachers. In fact, research findings do not point to the advantage of a certain method over another. However, because of the time constraints and the big number of students, the majority of teachers’ response seems to be pen-and-paper feedback.

Even within this traditional way of responding, teachers may choose to respond in a variety of ways. For example, they could give direct or indirect feedback, identify the error or just locate it, use larger or smaller categories of errors, use codes, symbols or verbal comments, or use textual corrections versus endnotes. Indirect feedback, for example, is when the teacher indicates an error through circling, underlining, highlighting, or marking its location in the sentence with or without verbal clues or an error code, and asks the students to make corrections themselves. On the other hand, direct feedback is given when the teacher provides the correct form for the students. Ferris (2002) indicates that indirect feedback “forces students to be more reflective and analytical about their errors than if they simply transcribed

teacher corrections” (p. 63). In addition, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) argue that indirect feedback has a positive effect on improving student writing over the long term. According to Ferris and Roberts (2001), second language acquisition theorists and ESL writing specialists argue that indirect feedback is preferable for most students writers as it could engage them in “guided learning and problem solving” (p. 164). However, Lee (2004) indicates that direct feedback may be appropriate for beginner students and when the errors are “untreatable” or cannot be self-corrected such as “syntax and vocabulary errors” (p. 286). In fact, there are various possible approaches to feedback, and teachers should offer students a range of feedback types that can provide a greater chance of success and learning than reliance on a single technique.

Teachers’ responses or feedback on students’ writing can also be analyzed into two types. It could be considered either content-level or surface-level. According to VanDeWeghe (2005), content-level feedback may include “comments to delete, reorganize or add information, as well as questions intended to challenge students’ thinking” (p. 110), while surface-level feedback may include editing and comments that are related to grammar, spelling, punctuation, or format. He conducted a study in which he analyzed the type of feedback and how it influenced the quality of students’ final drafts. Results showed that students who received surface level feedback improved to some extent in writing conventions, while those who received content level feedback increased their writing fluency. However, although the revisions did show some improvements in students’ conventions, VanDeWeghe notes that the improvement was not considered significant. In another study, Hyland (2003) echoes the same issue and explains that “texts improved most when students received feedback on both content and form” (p. 184).

Feedback has also been classified according to L2 teachers’ intentions and performance expectations. For example, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) outline a distinction between “evaluative feedback,” that makes judgment of students’ writing quality, and “corrective feedback,” that focuses on the corrections of students’ writing. They also summarize a number of response types including negative versus positive, marginal versus terminal, and extensive versus intensive. However, they state that none of these strategies contributes to differences on overall students’

writing quality. Nevertheless, social psychological research on feedback has indicated that the variance in positive and negative comments strongly affects students' acceptance of it. Hyland (2003) indicates that positive remarks can be motivating and "many L2 learners attach considerable importance to them" (p. 187). However, Bradine, Bradine, and Deegan (2000) report that teachers at both the high school and university level overwhelmingly respond to their students' writing negatively. For example, in their action research, they interviewed high school students from a private school in the Midwest and found that the students believed that the main reason teachers respond to their writing is to tell them that they are doing wrong.

### The Importance of Feedback on Writing

Responding to writing is one of the teachers' most crucial and important tasks. Teachers' feedback on students' writing could have great effects on their writing skills, attitudes, and motivation. In addition, it plays an essential role in motivating and encouraging students. Furthermore, Frances (1993) suggests that responding to students writing could be a very "powerful force for positive change when it centers on the revision process" (p. 5). That is, teachers' thoughtful comments could create a motive for revising and writing better drafts. Moreover, he indicates that commenting on students' writing helps teachers achieve pedagogical purposes. To illustrate, normally, writers write their text to be read; however, most students may find it very difficult to imagine the readers' response in advance. Therefore, teacher's feedback could give the students the chance to see how others could respond to their writing and learn from this response and use it as a guide in their writing. By providing such feedback, Sommers (1982) notes that teachers will "dramatize the presence of a reader" and will help their students become that "questioning reader themselves" (p. 184). Becoming such a reader will help the students evaluate what they have written and develop control over their writing. Muncie (2000) shares this opinion and asserts that teachers' feedback can have the positive effect of "producing in the learner a sense of reader awareness and of giving him or her an outside view of the text" (p. 52). Frances (1993) has also reported experiment results which confirmed that even minimum feedback helps writers envision how readers may interpret their text, which helps them, as writers, to convey their ideas successfully. This type of "formative

feedback,” as noted by Hyland (2003), “aims at encouraging the development of students’ writing and is regarded as critical in improving and consolidating learning” (p. 177).

According to Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, and Garnier (2002), teachers’ feedback and the chance to revise writing according to this feedback are “key to students’ development as writers” (p. 5). They believe that beginner writers need guidance to evaluate, modify, or restructure their ideas in order to improve their writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) explain that at the beginning levels of writing development, the purpose of responding and giving students feedback is to support their effort in writing. They assert that teachers need to “encourage students to continue, to feel good about their writing and to carry the activity through to completion” (p. 275). Moreover, Davis and Fulton (1997) claim that feedback from the teacher produces significant gains in the students’ writing quality. Ferris (1997) has looked at the impact of teachers’ written feedback on 47 students’ drafts in a sheltered ESL freshmen composition course at a large public university in California. She found that revisions that could be linked to teachers’ written feedback resulted in text improvement. She indicated that teachers’ notes in the margins, the requests for clarification, and their comments on grammar lead to the most substantive revision. Additionally, Krashen (1984) has also asserted this point and reports Beach’s (1979) study which confirms that “teacher evaluation and corrections of drafts had a positive effect on writing quality of high school students” (p. 11).

One of the important benefits of effective and appropriate feedback is that it could save time and effort in the writing classrooms. In spite of the fact that teachers may spend hours responding to students’ writing, well-written feedback could help teachers communicate their ideas, suggestions, and specific or personal comments with individual writers in large classes. Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti (1997) realize this fact and confirm, “It allows for individualized attention and one-to-one communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of a class” (p. 29). Smith (2005) also echoes the same point and asserts that “lack of written, ‘detailed precision’ regarding our expectations for students will increase the hours we spend with individuals helping them to understand our evaluative standards” (p. 1).

Previous research has shown that teachers' content-based feedback is beneficial for the effective development of students' language skills from primary grades to university. The flow of communication made by teachers' comments acts as a tool that helps students share their personal events and express their feelings and ideas. Fazio (2001) notes that this value of teachers' commentaries or content based feedback "has been shown to be especially important for those who are shy in class and those who require encouragement in developing a sense of voice" (p. 236). Moreover, Weaver (2006) suggests that teachers' feedback can alert students to their strengths and weaknesses and provide them with the means by which they can assess their performance and make improvements.

In addition, writing assessments and responding to writing could greatly influence students' attitudes toward writing and their motivation to learn. According to Leki (1990), "writing teachers and students alike do intuit that written responses can have a great effect on student writing and attitude toward writing" (p. 58). She notes that such a great effect can be whether a writer will continue to write at all. As Grabe and Kaplan (1996) note, "students can be easily confused by unclear, vague, or ambiguous responses and become frustrated with their writing process" (p. 377). On the other hand, they note that students can be "positively motivated to explore many areas of knowledge and personal creativity through supportive and constructive responses to their writing" (p. 377).

Finally, responding to students writing and providing supportive feedback does not only contribute to students' writing development, attitudes, and motivation, but it also contributes to teachers' self and professional satisfaction. In her article "Responding to Writers: What I Value," Gilbert (1990) reported her experience in responding to students writing and the strategies that she had adapted, and concludes with the following:

Responding to writing may be the single most important influence in making my classroom a safe place to write. Through all the adjustments I have made the last several years, I have discovered that it is the privilege of sharing the visions of teenagers, as well as, the responsibility of writing back to them, that has renewed me year after year when I face the new stacks of papers in the fall. If I have encouraged genuine human interaction, honest, and personal

communication, and greater self-esteem through supportive response, then that is the most important thing I can do as a teacher and the most rewarding thing I can do as a person. (p. 49)

To sum up, the nature of teachers' responses to students' writing can vary widely, and their feedback practices can also differ according to their intentions, task type, and students' proficiency level. Whether it is oral or written, form based or content based, evaluative or corrective, teachers' response to students' writing could have great impact on student writers. But while teachers' response may contribute significantly to students' development as writers as well as their attitudes and motivation to writing, there is less certainty about the form this response should take, and whether it should focus more on ideas or forms. Probably one of the most common forms of feedback on writing is error correction.

### Responses to Errors in L2 Writing

#### Definition of Error Correction

The earliest L2 research on teachers' feedback on students' writing was concerned almost entirely with error corrections (Ferris, 2003). Since there is a number of similar terms related to "error correction" in the literature, I believe it is important to provide a clarification of the term first. "Error correction," as defined by Truscott (1996), is "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (p. 329). This definition, as noted by Ferris (2003), extends to include lexical errors, word choice, word form, collocations, and mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and typing conventions. When teachers mark students' writing, they provide feedback on errors using different strategies. Ferris and Roberts (2001) list various methods of error feedback:

1. Explicit, which is correcting students' errors directly.
2. Coded, in which the teachers uses symbols that indicate the type of errors.
3. Un-coded, in which the teacher underlines or highlights the errors.
4. Marginal,, which is marking errors in the margins.
5. Terminal, which is commenting on errors at the end of the paper.

It is noteworthy that the debate among researchers concerning whether these types of error feedback are effective still unresolved. However, Raimes (1991) argues that whatever systems we use for marking students' errors, we have to "let our students know what that system is" (p. 281). To illustrate, students often have no idea what certain symbols or codes mean, no idea why there is a question mark above a word or a sentence, and certainly no idea why their composition is a "B" rather than an "A." She states that there is no point in spending time looking for the perfect system of marking errors in student writing as "there isn't one." She also strongly confirms that "the one thing above all that will help any marking system is if our students understand it" (p. 281).

Issues regarding how and even whether to give students feedback on their written errors have become a source of interest and debate among researchers, teachers, and students. One of the continuous debates in second language acquisition is whether grammatical error correction can help second language writers improve their writing accuracy and the overall quality of their texts. Two prominent researchers in the field, Truscott (1996) and Ferris (2002), have actually had a public debate on this issue. Truscott (1996) takes a strong position against error correction in L2 writing and even argues against giving feedback on students' errors. He claims that error correction is useless and "should be abandoned" in L2 classrooms (p. 327). Yates and Kenel (2003) note that Truscott's rejection was based on his assumption that language acquisition is a gradual developmental process that cannot be furthered by explicit comments or suggestions. Truscott (1996) further explains that researchers have ignored the side effects of grammar corrections such as the time and effort it absorbs and its impact on students' attitudes toward writing. Truscott (1999) insists that error feedback has no significant effect on the writer as he claims that there are no convincing studies that show its effectiveness or its role in helping student writers. And, as noted by Ferris and Roberts (2001), "only a few available studies have explicitly examined differences in accuracy and writing quality between students who have received error feedback and those who have not" (p. 162). In his response to Chandler (2004), Truscott (2004) highlights his conviction that grammar correction is "a bad idea" (p. 342).



Ferris (2002) counters Truscott's claims by giving three reasons for providing corrective feedback. The first reason is that error feedback has proven to be fruitful in terms of accuracy both on revisions and on targeted patterns of errors. A number of researchers over the past ten years have examined the impact of error correction on students' revision and accuracy (e.g., Fazio, 2001; Ferris, 2002; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Gunn & Raven, 2005; Yates & Kenkel, 2002). Several research studies have demonstrated that error correction can help students improve their accuracy in the short term, in other words, on their revisions of the same essay or on targeted error patterns throughout the semester. In an experimental classroom study, Ferris and Roberts (2001) investigated 72 university students' abilities to self-edit their texts using three feedback types: coding of five grammatical categories, underlining, and no feedback. They found that both groups who received feedback outperformed those who received no feedback and concluded that underlining helps students edit their own texts almost as well as coding does. Moreover, Fathman and Whalley (1990) conducted a study in which they examined 72 college students' writing against four different feedback conditions: no feedback other than the grade given; grammar feedback consisting of underlining all grammatical errors; content feedback in which short and general comments were given; and a combination of grammar and content feedback. They found that only the grammar feedback group and the grammar plus content feedback group made significant progress in grammatical accuracy. They conclude that the focus on grammar does not affect the content of writing negatively. However, Truscott (1996) criticized this study and pointed out that it did not provide evidence that the improvement seen in students' revisions would result in long-term improvement in their linguistic accuracy.

On the other hand, Ferris (2002) argues that the second reason for providing error feedback is that students themselves appreciate the teacher's feedback and find it helpful. Ferris (2004) reports some survey results which indicate that students prefer all of their errors to be pointed out so that they do not "miss anything" (p. 266). Although there is research which suggests that error correction is a useless means of improving students writing (for example, Truscott, 1996), Lee's (2004) research provides evidence that L2 students want error feedback and believe that they benefit from it. In addition, Hyland (2003) indicates that "teacher written feedback is highly

valued by second language writers and ... many learners particularly favor feedback on their grammar” (p. 179). Finally, the third and the final reason which Ferris (2002) gave as a response to Truscott’s claim is that accuracy is important in the real world and many professors and academics find errors “distracting and stigmatizing” (p. 9). However, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) wondered about the extent to which error correction can help student writers. They conclude, in order for error correction to work and achieve positive results, both researchers and teachers need to consider the following three important factors:

1. Is grammar feedback and instruction carried out selectively, systematically, and accurately?
2. Are individual student differences (including language proficiency, learning styles, motivation and attitude, first language, etc.) adequately considered and accounted for?
3. Are studies which assess the effectiveness of error correction designed and executed appropriately? (p. 202).

In addition, Cardelle and Corno (1981) emphasize that teachers should avoid correction strategies that might embarrass or frustrate students. Moreover, they suggest that attitudes, motivation, personality, and past language learning experience of the students must be taken into consideration when providing feedback to students. Cardelle and Corno further note that pointing to errors need not be considered as a punishment but rather as a chance to provide informative feedback to motivate students.

Until the 1970s, writing for L2 students was mainly perceived as language practice that could help them manipulate all the grammatical rules and vocabulary items which they had learned (Ferris, 2002). In fact, "traditionally, L2 writing achievement had been defined," in the terms of Kepner (1991), "as mastery of the discrete surface skills required for production of an accurately-written document" (p. 305). Based on this definition, L2 composition teachers perceived it as their duty to help students produce accurate compositions, and therefore directed their feedback to achieve this goal. Indeed, L2 writing classes were mainly “controlled” or “guided” composition activities in which students, for example, could practice the past tense by writing about what they did yesterday, or could change the adjectives in an already

composed paragraph into other suitable ones according to a given picture. Students texts were viewed as products to be “judged and evaluated” (Zamel, 1985, p. 81). Teachers gave more attention to language form, grammar, and sentence structure. They were consistently correcting and pointing out all of the grammatical errors and mistakes so as to avoid bad habits and language fossilization. Some teachers, as indicated by Kepner (1991), even felt “morally obligated to correct all mistakes in L2 written word” (p. 305). They also might avoid requiring students “to engage in sustained writing assignments, because of the burdensome of correcting and explaining the many surface level errors” (305). This emphasis on students’ accuracy or lack thereof was also due to the influence of behavioral psychology and structural linguistics on second language teaching. Thus, as Ferris (2002) notes, error correction and grammar instructions were “major, perhaps even the primary components of writing instructions in L2 classes” (p. 5). Hillocks (2005) shares this conviction and highlights that teachers of writing in the schools “still appear to rely heavily on the teaching of forms and devices of writing while neglecting how to work with the content” (p. 240).

In the 1970s, composition practitioners and theorists of native-English speaking classes began to focus on the writers themselves and the process they use in composing a text rather than the form of writing (Ferris, 2002). This important shift had great implications for L1 and L2 writing classes. Instead of focusing on a surface structure of a written text and emphasizing the correct form of essays, paragraphs, and sentences, teachers began to give attention to the content and the development of ideas or the writing process itself. Attention to content has proved to be beneficial with regards to writing fluency. Kepner (1991) reports an experimental study finding which suggests that L2 students who received content focused written comments on their writing spent more time writing and became more fluent than those students whose compositions received error corrections. Bates, Lane, and Lange (1993) indicate that responding to content is as important as responding to the sentence level errors for many reasons. First, it helps improve the content of later drafts and future papers. Also, it is “desired by the majority of ESL writers” (p. 20). In addition, it helps the students develop a sense of audience and gives them the feedback they may need on thinking and organizational patterns they have transferred from their native

language to English. That is, when teachers respond to the content, they may point out rhetorical differences between the native language and the target language, for example, stating the point directly or avoiding redundancy and veering off the topic. However, as noted by Paulus (1999), “the shift to a focus on the writing process has not... eliminated the difficulties of providing effective feedback” (p. 266). He notes that teachers themselves are often uncertain of the best way to provide feedback to their students. Frances (1993) indicates that writing teachers always face the problem of forming effective responding strategies to help students improve writing. DeGroff (1992), on the other hand, confirms that many teachers feel a “lack of expertise” in responding to students’ writing. He suggests that teachers and researchers should understand response in different contexts and “find answers to questions about ways of responding and influences in response” (p. 131).

#### Nature of Teachers’ Feedback

Early reviewers on the nature of teacher feedback of both L1 and L2 research were very critical to teachers’ responding behaviors (for example, Leki, 1990; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). On the other hand, recent literature on responding to students’ writing indicates that the most dominant feature of teachers’ comments is still the traditional evaluative response (for example, Ferris, 2004). Early reviewers described teachers’ feedback as insensitive, formalist, and authoritarian (Connors & Lunsford, 1993), and as “arbitrary and idiosyncratic” (Sommers, 1982, p. 149). Sommers also notes that teachers comments tend to be directed to form rather than content and that they are too directive, taking students’ attention away from their own purposes in their texts. As for Zamel (1985), teachers’ marks and comments are often contradictory, “confusing, arbitrary, and inaccessible” (p. 79). She also suggests that teachers’ comments usually take the form of “abstract and vague prescriptions and directives” which students find difficult to interrupt (p. 79). Moreover, she notes that teachers respond to text as a fixed product and rarely make content-specific comments or provide specific strategies for revising the text.

In line with Sommers’s (1982) view, Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) point out that teachers’ comments tend to take control over students’ writing and appropriate their texts. However, Reid (2001) proposes that appropriation of students’ texts is just

“a mythical fear for ESL writing teachers” (p. 210). Hyland (2002) also reports that teachers’ feedback consists mainly of “short, careless, exhausted, or insensitive comments” (p. 186). On the other hand, Hyland (1998) points out that over the past twenty years, research into L1 writing has questioned the effectiveness of written feedback as a tool that could improve students’ texts. He argues that L1 teachers view written feedback as the least useful type of response that they give to students on their writing. He notes that “much written feedback on L1 writing is of poor quality, focuses on the wrong issues, and is often ignored, misunderstood or misinterpreted by the students writers” (p. 256). Hyland (2003) has also emphasized this point by suggesting that much of the written feedback is “inconsistent,” “formalist,” “contradictory,” and “insensitive” (p. 178).

Sommers’ (1985) study provides evidence that “most teachers’ comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to text” (p. 152). She indicates that teachers’ comments are not related to the particulars of the students’ texts. In other words, they can be easily removed from one paragraph and rubber stamped to another student’s text, and they “would make as much or as little sense on the second text as they do [on the first]” (p. 152). In addition, Zamel (1985) notes that teachers of ESL composition usually make similar types of comments and are more concerned with specific linguistic errors and problems. She believes that ESL writing teachers, like native language teachers, rarely seems to expect students to revise their texts beyond the surface level. Moreover, Zamel (1985) states that teachers seem to find it very “difficult to respond to students’ writing unless they can respond to it as a final draft” (p. 81). She believes that students’ texts are viewed as product to be judged and assessed. Therefore, teachers’ responses do not take into consideration the writers’ intentions and messages, but rather focus on grammatical errors, mechanics, and other surface level features. This is not to claim that teachers do not believe that certain features of writing are more important than others, but, as noted by Zamel (1985), “that the impression their responses create is that local errors are either as important as, if not more important than, meaning-related concerns” (p. 82).

Cohen and Cavalcanti’s (1991) survey has suggested that there may be a mismatch between the written feedback that teachers provide on compositions and the

students' interests. They conclude that one of the reasons behind this is the nature of teachers' feedback, which is "unclear, inaccurate, and unbalanced" (p. 155). This is due to the fact that teachers focus only on certain elements of the written product such as the grammar and the mechanics, and because they overemphasize negative points and their comments are not structured enough to help writers develop their ideas. MacDonald (1991) indicates that teachers' written "squiggles" may be meaningful only for teachers but not for the students. One writing centre tutor enforces this argument in her reflection about teachers' comments: "Sometimes I think the margin comments are more for the teacher than they are for the student" (Swyt, n.d., para. 19).

#### The Relation between Feedback and Students' Motivation, Attitudes, Self- Esteem and Writing Apprehensions

Teachers' feedback can have a powerful effect on students' emotions, especially writing apprehension, motivation, their beliefs, and their own writing abilities and skills as writers (Wiltes, 2001). There is a consensus among researchers that that teachers' feedback can inspire and motivate students to work harder in order to improve their writing. According to Sommers (1982), teachers' comments "create a motive for doing something different in the next draft." In other words, she asserts that "thoughtful comments create the motive for revising" (p. 149). He further suggests that without such comments from the teacher, students will revise in a consistently narrow and predictable way. On the other hand, without the comments from readers, students will think that their writing has communicated their meaning and will perceive that there is no need for revising their texts.

Crone-Blevins (2002) has summarized teachers' responsibilities regarding feedback on writing and the consequences their feedback could have on student writers as follows:

As teachers of writing, we are told that we should encourage, motivate, inspire, liberate, and challenge our students with both our written and verbal response. We should also instruct, guide, correct, and -- above all -- be honest in our reactions. At the same time, however, we are cautioned that everything we do or say can have long-term psychological or practical effects on

students' desire to write and/or their feelings about literature, reading, language, or even school, in general. (p. 93)

There is no doubt that the way teachers approach their writing classes and the type of feedback they give will influence how their students view and approach the writing process, perceive their teachers' feedback, and make revisions to their writing. Teachers should also be aware of the potential feedback has for helping to create a supportive and motivating teaching environment. Also, they should be aware of the students' need for care when constructing their comments and feedback. Because of the fact that writing is very personal, students' motivation and self-esteem could be harmed if they receive too much criticism. On the other hand, praising good work is very important, especially for less able writers. As Hyland and Hyland (2001) note, "We may use praise to help reinforce appropriate language behaviors and foster students' self esteem" (p. 186). Therefore, it is important to consider which message is being conveyed as it has the potential to be misinterpreted. As previously noted, there is no doubt that poorly written feedback might be taken personally by students and may cause defensiveness and loss in confidence. In addition, Weaver (2006) believes that self-esteem could be strongly affected by negative or unexpected feedback.

However, Young (2000) addresses this issue from a different perspective. In his qualitative study about self-esteem and mature students' feelings about feedback on assignments, he confirms that the students' level of self-esteem affects the message they receive. To illustrate, students who have low self-esteem tend to consider all feedback as a judgment of their ability, whereas those who have high self-esteem do not. In other words, students with high self-esteem have positive attitudes toward being assessed and receiving negative criticism. He notes the following:

High and medium self-esteem students tended to see feedback as something they were able to act on and make use of; students with low self-esteem were more likely to feel defeated and consider leaving the course. (p. 415)

On the other hand, students who receive negative criticism on their writing over a period of years may develop unhealthy or negative attitudes towards writing, their work, or even towards themselves (Brimner, 1982). Connors and Lunsford

(1993) found that although negative comments did not have any definitive impact on students' writing quality, they "did strongly affect students' attitudes toward writing" (p. 201). As teachers, we may notice that many of our students are used to having their papers criticized by the time they reach secondary school. For example, as teachers walk around reading over shoulders during the writing activities, students often bend their heads over their papers hiding them so that the teachers will not read their inevitable errors. In addition, many students seem to be reluctant to hand in their papers, so they usually place them at the bottom of the stack so as to escape the classroom before the teacher begins reading.

However, in their research about the effect of teachers' feedback on the growth of students' writing quality, Davis and Fulton (1997) reported that students mostly preferred helpful criticism as feedback to improve their writing. In addition, Wiltse (2001) notes that constructive criticism could increase some students' self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to write and motivate them to work harder in order to improve their writing. However, the same comments which were intended to be constructive may cause other students to hate writing and give up trying to improve later drafts. Those students may develop writing anxiety or apprehension because of a given feedback. This writing anxiety seems to be more common with students with poor writing skills than skilled students. However, it is worth noting that it is also possible that poor writing skills will lead to writing apprehension. According to Wiltse (2001), "writing apprehension can begin at a young age and become a lifelong problem" (p. 3).

Prior to attempting to discuss the relation between teachers' feedback and writing apprehension, I believe it is important to know what is meant by writing apprehension. According to Wiltse (2001), writing apprehension is a construct that attempts to differentiate people who find writing enjoyable and those who experience high levels of apprehension and anxiety when writing is required. Relating this construct to feedback, it is "a construct associated with a person's tendencies to approach or avoid situations that require writing accompanied by some amount of evaluation" (p. 8). According to Faigley, Daley, and Witte (1981), highly apprehensive writers find writing unrewarding and experience high levels of anxiety



while writing. This anxiety is reflected in their behavior as they write, their attitudes towards their writing, and in their written products.

Review of the research related to teachers' feedback and writing apprehension indicate that teachers' response to students' writing could have great influence on students' writing anxiety. For example, Faigley, Daly, and Witte (1981) assert that deficits in skills training and poor or negative teacher responses to students' early writing attempts could apparently affect later levels of writing anxiety, whereas positive skill development and reinforcement leads to less writing apprehension. They note that written products of students who suffer from high writing apprehension write fewer words, have lower qualifications, and show less intensity. Kasper and Petrello (1996) report that it is not the task of writing that leads to anxiety in basic or developmental writing students, but rather the anticipation of the teacher's response and evaluation of that writing. They hold the view that many ESL students recall their past difficulties with writing for evaluation, and their perceptions of their abilities as writers have been shaped by their writing experiences in school. Those students may continue to have difficulty in writing because they have been conditioned to expect failure and negative comments. This problem is compounded when students tend to evaluate themselves as they write, which increases their anxiety and impedes the generation of ideas. They found that adopting a non-judgmental approach that emphasizes fluency and clarity of ideas instead of correctness caused both writing anxiety to decrease and writing performance to improve.

On the other hand, Wiltse (2001) notes that individuals' expectations of how writing helps them achieve their goals, both intrinsic and extrinsic, can play an important role in how they process and react to teachers' feedback. To illustrate, people who expect to receive rewards or outcomes as a result of their efforts will be highly motivated to spend more effort on the task at hand, while people who do not expect any rewards as a response to their efforts will be demotivated and may not try hard. For writing students, these rewards can be grades, praise, or positive comments and encouragements. By contrast, Brimner (1982) points out that there is no significant difference between positive comments versus negative comments by teachers. However, others argues that, "the red pencil is so associated with written expressions in the lives of some children and teachers that it has come to have the

same effect as the red light has upon traffic. Stop!” (p. 58). Recognizing this issue, Freedman (1987) came up with the implication that teachers should not litter students’ writing with red ink since this approach discourages and overwhelms them.

Additionally, Ferris (2004) indicates that some “practitioners insist that using a red pen seems punitive and can inhibit students or make them anxious” (p. 196). Others argue that the tone, the nature of the feedback, and the relationship of the teacher and the student is far more significant than the color of the ink.

It is worth noting here that teachers’ response style is one of the features that could affect the pattern of praise and criticism in writing feedback. Hyland and Hyland (2001) cite Anson (1989) who put forth an argument which confirms that the way teachers judge writing and give feedback is influenced by their belief systems. These beliefs are usually the result of personal constructs but also related to the social context where teachers work. They note that teachers typically respond to students’ writing in one of three ways: The first is dualistic responders who focus mainly on surface level features and care more about standards. The second way is relativistic responders who attend almost exclusively to the ideas and content, often ignoring linguistic and rhetorical problems. Finally, reflective responders who respond to both ideas and linguistic or structure and attempt not to be authoritative in their approach (p. 188).

Indeed, there are some factors that could influence teachers’ response style. According to Hyland and Hyland (2001), these factors may include students’ language ability, task type, and the stage at which feedback is given. For example, feedback given at a draft stage will be different from that given on a final product as each one has its own function. Teachers who adopt giving feedback on drafts view it as “developmental” (p. 188) and may offer more critical comments on specific aspects of the text, while those who offer feedback on a final product are more likely to give a holistic assessment of the writing, praising and criticizing more general features. In addition, Degroff (1992) suggests that writing achievement may also have great influence on teachers’ response style. She reports a study which showed differences in the ways the teacher responded to the writing of high and low achieving students. For example, the teacher gave more praise or positive comments to the high achieving students.

Goldstein (2004) confirms that it is important to consider what we bring as teachers to the process of reading and responding to students' writing and what our students bring to the process of composing and revising. He highlights that there is a unique interaction between teachers' factors and individual students that could greatly affect the way we respond and how students use our feedback. Teachers' factors may include, but are not limited to, the teachers' personality, pedagogical beliefs about the writing process and how to comment, attitudes towards specific characteristics of students, attitudes toward individual students, attitudes towards the content of writing, knowledge about the content of the students' writing, and expectations of a particular student. On the other hand, students' factors include, but are not limited to, certain factors such as students' personality, age, goals, and expectations, affective factors like motivation, proficiency level, past learning experiences, learning style, content knowledge and interest, time constraints, attitudes towards the teacher, the language, the content, the writing task, and the feedback itself. Thus, as indicated by Hyland and Hyland (2001), any study of teachers' written feedback must take into account the interplay between these factors and consider written comments as "multidimensional social acts in their own right" (p. 188).

#### Students' Perceptions and Reactions Regarding Teachers' Feedback

Goldstein (2004) suggests that teachers need to approach each class with the expectation that students do not already know the philosophies underlying the way teachers comment, and they may have expectations that contradict the ways in which teachers provide feedback. That is, even though teachers believe that the intentions of their comments are clear, those comments may not be clear to all students, and even when the intent is clear, students still may not know how to revise or handle these comments. As noted by Beck (2006), research which has investigated both teachers' and students' perspectives on writing suggests that they may employ different criteria in evaluating writing and approach the evaluation process with different purpose and perspective. For example, students reading of teachers' comments may be guided by the main purpose of getting high grade rather than improving their writing skills. Beck notes that some studies have indicated that "teachers have difficulty presenting written feedback in a way that students perceive as positive or constructive" (p. 417).

In addition, even when students do not perceive a negative intent behind their teachers' feedback, they may not share the appropriate background knowledge that can help them interpret their teachers' instructive remarks as they wish them to be interpreted, which may lead to anger and confusion regarding the intent of the comments.

According to MacDonald (1991), teachers assume that students attend to the feedback, learn about their writing in relation to some ideal goal or standards, and incorporate this learning into their future writing efforts. However, an examination of the research in the field of feedback and students' reaction to and perceptions of that feedback shows that the ideal teacher-students shared understanding, and "the development of students' writing skills is at best, imperfectly realized in practice" (p. 33). That is, as Wiltse (2001) points out, students often misunderstand teachers' intentions in written comments. He asserts that they revise papers mainly to get better marks by meeting what they have perceived to be the expectations of their teachers, based upon their written comments. Gunn and Raven (2005) also found that students at the American University of Sharjah who were given a chance to rewrite for a higher grade were most likely to attend to teachers' comments.

However, a recent study conducted by Beck (2006) has indicated that research on teachers' response to students' writing has often privileged the teachers' perspective over that of the students and fails to give more attention to the "ways in which teachers' comments are facilitators of intersubjective processes" (p. 417). Taking into consideration the discrepancies in knowledge, purpose, and criteria that exist between the teachers and the students, ignoring how students perceive and interpret teachers' messages will overlook an essential step in the activity of teaching writing. Beck (2006) notes that exploring students' subjective intentions regarding writing is very important in the light of research that has revealed that teachers and students usually bring different understanding to conferences about classroom writing, and that these differences may lead to "persistently mismatched expectations for what counts as good writing" (p. 418).

A number of surveys of students' opinions and preferences regarding teachers' feedback on writing have been conducted by both L1 and L2 researchers. For example, Ferris and Hedgcock (1999) report the finding that survey respondents in

their study report “disregarding their teachers’ feedback, having difficulty understanding it, and even feeling hostility toward their teachers’ perceived attempts to appropriate their writing” (p. 130). Students’ preferences and attitudes toward the way errors are corrected have also been investigated in some studies. For instance, Leki (1991) conducted a study in which she investigated 100 ESL college students’ opinion about error correction in general and how they preferred to be corrected. The results showed that 70 students out of 100 wanted their errors to be indicated and only one was satisfied to have only those errors that impede communication to be pointed out. Students in this study revealed that they wanted every error to be marked, and most of them approved of written clues from the teacher that can help them correct their errors themselves. The most common means of error correction reported in that study was underlining and giving clues, which was perceived as a method of “puzzle” for learners (p. 4). However, Leki (1990) reports a study in which students expressed “hostility” at having their errors pointed out for them to correct. Nevertheless, she suggests that supportive comments without indication of errors had a positive influence on students’ attitudes.

Bradine, Bradine, and Deegan (2000), also conducted a study that investigated private high school students’, in Hudson High School, Ohio, preferences, and perceptions regarding teachers’ feedback on their writing. They report that students preferred specific comments rather than general observations. They also indicate that students believe that certain comments are more helpful when they explain why something is good or bad. They assert that telling students that their essay or part of their essay is good is not enough, as students want to know why it is effective. In addition, students did not like to make “macro structural changes” (p. 95) to their writing. In other words, they did not want to rewrite the whole essay, but they prefer to change smaller sentences or paragraphs. Moreover, they found that students did not respond well to comments they felt were expressed in a highly judgmental way as well reacted negatively to directional comments. Further, they note that students prefer praise on their compositions only when it explains why it is praise worthy. Finally, they indicate that students respond well to a positive tone rather than a sarcastic one. They also claim that students find comments on spelling and grammar unhelpful.

In addition, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) reported a study which showed students' preference for longer comments, especially those which address and explain specific problems and give specific suggestions. In addition, they indicate that students tend to find short, general comments and comments that question the content more difficult to handle. However, they note that it is also important to consider the differences in students' individual reaction and preference to feedback. Therefore, one type of feedback may have different responses from different students.

In contrast to the early studies which argued that teachers' comments were not effective and ignored by students (i.e., Sommers, 1982, and Zamel, 1985), Conrad and Goldstein (1999) note that students overwhelmingly report that they value teachers comments and find them helpful in improving their writings. Hyland (1998) reports on a finding which suggests that ESL students greatly value teachers' written feedback and rate it more highly than other forms of feedback such as peer feedback and oral feedback. In addition, Gunn and Raven (2005) recently investigated the perceptions of more than 450 students in the American University of Sharjah. They concluded that "it is very clear that feedback was valued by students" (p. 268). Another recent study was conducted by Weaver (2006) in the faculties of Business and Art & Design in Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. 44 students were surveyed and interviewed regarding their perception and value of teachers' feedback on writing. In his findings, Weaver came to the conclusion that "students wholeheartedly recognize the value of feedback in improving their learning" although their responses suggested that "feedback is not as effective as it could be" (p. 390). In addition, his results indicate that the majority of students in his study believe that "teachers do not provide enough feedback" (382).

It is true that teachers' feedback on writing exerts different reactions from one student to another. Some students may ignore teachers' comments and may even never pay them any attention. In a typical writing classroom, as noted by Tyson (1999), students may "often take just enough time to glance at the grade before throwing the paper away" (p. 1). Others may read teachers' comments and just make "mental notes" (p. 170), as noted by Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), instead of incorporating these comments in their revision. Gunn and Raven (2005) state that although the students in their study "acknowledged reading and attending to the

comments teachers make, very few students acknowledged using the suggestions in their revisions” (p. 267). Academics complain that feedback is just a waste of time as students are more interested in their grade and pay little attention to feedback. Gilbert (1990) enforces this assumption and highlights, “as soon as I placed a grade on a paper, I virtually guaranteed that any other comment would be unnoticed” (p. 51). Researchers often mention the amount of time teachers spend marking students’ papers and writing comments that are either ignored or not used in revised drafts. Teachers even become more frustrated when students simply delete problematic sentences instead of rewriting them, despite their suggestions for revisions (Wiltes, 2001).

Macdonald (1991) suggests that the grade they receive may determine the attention students give to the feedback. For example, a low grade may discourage the students from reading the comments, while a high grade may encourage students to read the comments. He indicates that students receiving low grade in their compositions do not benefit as much as those who receive high grades. On the other hand, Paulus (1999) notes that the reliance on error correction as a main feedback type has resulted in negative student attitudes toward teachers’ response and has led to inattention to the given feedback. In addition, he indicates that the lack of positive, encouraging comments may also contribute to student inattention to feedback.

According to Weaver (2006), the language the teacher uses in responding to students’ writing could also influence the way in which students receive written feedback. To illustrate, he notes that judgmental statements, like “good report,” “fails to answer the question,” or “poor effort,” are seen as unhelpful and may cause anger or hurt, especially if critical or dismissive. Also, they may result in students becoming unreceptive to teachers’ comments. As noted by Ferris (2003), poorly written error feedback do not help students’ writing and may even cause harm. Dodigovic (2005) reports a story of a Japanese girl who kept crying for hours because the feedback she got on her essay said that “some of her sentences could not be understood by the lecturer” (p. 1). She also mentions another example of an Asian student who viewed his teacher’s feedback as personal and offensive. This student had passed a proficiency English test and gained confidence that his English was so good that any

remarks or attempts from the teacher to improve it offended him personally. Angry and frustrated, this student ended up dropping from at least four universities.

Moreover, Weaver (2006) states that using “unmitigated statements and imperatives cause difficulty in interpretation, which confuse or upset students, and the opportunity for learning is thus lost” (p. 381). Teachers must recognize that their feedback methods and styles send very strong and sometimes undesirable messages to their students. According to Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996), “the form and modality of teacher response affects students’ receptivity to most kinds of instructor input” (p. 289). Conrad and Goldstien (1999) suggest that the form of the feedback may also play an important role in students’ ability to understand, process, and use it. According to Ferris and Hedgecock (1998) teachers’ written comments about ideas and content may take different general forms:

1. Asking for further information.
2. Giving directions, suggestions, or requests for revisions.
3. Giving the students new information that will help them revise.
4. Giving positive feedback about what the students have done well. (p. 135)

Conrad and Goldstien (1999) note that the form of teachers’ written comments can affect and restrict students’ revision of the text. For example, brief, one word comments, cryptic questions, or imperatives in the margins such as “Why?” “Relevance”? or “Explain!” may provide too little information to the students (p. 26).

It is important here to consider some of the factors that could account for students’ success in revision. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) note that one of these factors is the classroom context and writing instruction or the way in which writing is taught. They argue that classroom instructions that focus on sentence level and language form reinforces students’ traditional view of revisions, and is associated with students mostly revising on the sentence level. Another factor is the students’ self-esteem and abilities as writers. To illustrate, MacDoInald (1991) argues that students with poor writing achievements tend to discredit their teachers’ comments in order to maintain a good self-image, which therefore results in poor achievements.

As previously noted, there are also some factors that can influence students’ perceptions of teachers’ feedback. One of theses is the educational context. Weaver (2006) indicates that the educational context presents teachers with a dichotomy in



providing feedback on students' writing. On the one hand, teachers wish to present timely and effective feedback, but on the other, they feel the pressure of reducing the amount of feedback because of their workload and the increased number of students.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed shows that the debate over the effectiveness of teachers' feedback on students' writing skill is still unresolved. However, much research offers insight into the impact of this feedback on students' development, motivation, and attitudes toward writing and language learning in particular. Indeed, the feedback that teachers provide on students' compositions might be of paramount importance both as an evaluative tool of students writing and as a learning tool. However, the literature suggests that learners' perceptions about the usefulness and nature of teachers' feedback may vary according to the educational context and students' level of literacy. A number of studies has investigated students perceptions and reaction to teachers' feedback in some L1 and L2 educational contexts. However, given the educational context of this study, I wonder how UAE high school students perceive teachers' feedback on their writing. How do they perceive the nature of their teachers' feedback? Do they think that they are given enough and supportive feedback? And what do they do with this feedback?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to investigate high school students' perceptions of teachers' response or feedback on their writing. It sought answers for the following questions:

1. Do students value feedback and find it useful?
2. What kind of feedback do students think they get?
3. Do they think they get enough and supportive feedback?
4. What do they do with this feedback?
5. What preferences might they have?

To achieve the purpose of this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were extracted from multiple sources including surveys, interviews, and samples of students' papers. For the sake of triangulation, three sources of data were used. The first source was a survey filled out by 130 high school students from three different female schools in Fujairah. The second source of data was interviews that were conducted with 17 students in order to reveal more in-depth responses to the statements of the survey and the research questions. Third, and finally, samples of students' papers were investigated in order to identify the nature of teachers' feedback and provide examples for some of the given comments and corrections.

#### The Participants

The participants were all female high school students from three different all female schools in Fujairah. There were 97 students from Al Raheeb Basic and Secondary School, 28 students from Lubabah Bint Al Hareth, and five students from Dibba Secondary School for Girls. The majority of students were from Al Raheeb School, because, as a teacher working in that school, it was much easier for me to get access to the students there. In addition, all the participants of my study were girls because the school I am working in is a single-sex educational institution. In addition, it was not possible for me to visit male schools during my working hours to have boys as other possible participants. Students in this study were all from grades 11 and 12 in the secondary level. I chose these grades, because students at this level are required to write essays and may have experienced different types of responses on their writing.

Grade 11 and 12 are classified into two sections in the public educational system the UAE. The Science section focuses on scientific subjects, while students in the Art section usually study literary subjects like Geography, History, and Social Studies. However, the two sections have the same English curriculum and study the same English textbook (*English for the Emirates*). Also, they all have seven classes of English per week. The participants' age range was from 16-18 years old, and they all started studying English from grade one in primary school. The background information of the participants is summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1. Background Data about the Participants

	The School Name			Grade		Section	
	Al Raheeb	Lubabah	Dibba	12	11	Art	Science
No. students	97	28	5	74	56	80	50
total	130			130		130	

### Instruments

#### Survey

A survey was the basic tool for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. It was divided into three main sections. In the first part of the first section, students were asked to provide some background information, such as the name of their school, the grade, the section, and whether they had had instructions in how to use feedback or not. The second part of this section focused on the nature of teachers' feedback and the attention which students pay to this feedback. Students were asked to tick the appropriate answer in each question (see Appendix A1). In the second section, there were six short open-ended questions about what students do with teachers' feedback and what some of the comments and the corrections that they do not understand are. Also, they were asked if they feel teachers' responses to their writing helps them improve. They were also requested to write examples of what they perceived as positive or negative comments. Finally, students were asked to rate their skills in writing compositions (see Appendix A2). Most of the questions in the first and second section of the surveys were based on a survey conducted by Ferris (1995).

The third section of the survey consisted of 30 close-ended statements which were also meant to investigate students' perceptions, attitudes, and preferences regarding feedback. Students were asked to read each statement and respond as honestly and objectively as they could by ticking the box that best represented them. The scale used had four response options, which were "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" (see Appendix A3). I decided not to have a "not sure" option because I thought that this choice could be a chance for some students to escape some statements. In addition, I wanted the students to consider the statements and express definite views.

Surveys were first administrated at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. The participants were 50 students from both Al Raheeb Basic and Secondary School for Girls and Lubabah Bint Al Hareth Secondary School in Fujairah. Grade 12 students from both schools took their final exams in Al Raheeb School. I administrated the surveys to groups of 15 students at a time for two days. The surveys were translated and administrated in Arabic in order to facilitate comprehension. I also explained some of the terms used in the survey items. However, from their questions, I noted that some students had misinterpreted some of the statements. In addition, most of them seemed to be reluctant to answer the survey and filled it out rather quickly. I believe that one of the reasons behind this was the administration environment. To illustrate, the setting and the time at which the surveys were administrated, the end of the term after an exam, could not help me maintain a healthy environment for administrating the surveys. Given this fact, I considered those surveys as a pilot for the coming surveys. In fact, it helped me know which statements need to be further explained and which terms needed to be elaborated.

A total of 130 surveys were administrated at two stages. First, 57 surveys were administrated to students from the three schools during a summer course in Al Raheeb Basic and Secondary School. Second, 72 surveys were distributed at the end of September 2006 of this academic year in the same school. I decided not to distribute the surveys at the beginning of the academic year and wait for a month in order to allow students time to be familiar with writing activities and the teachers' responses to their writing. Five classroom teachers, who taught multiple sections, allowed me to come into their classrooms and administer the survey during the students' regular

class time. They were seven classes at different times. This helped ensure that the students felt comfortable in the research environment. I prefaced the distributions of the surveys by explaining to the students I was working on my master's thesis about teachers' feedback on writing, and this could be their chance to help me know how to best respond to students' writing. In addition, I told them that their honest responses could help us, as teachers, improve our writing response practice. Moreover, I made it clear to the students that the purpose of the survey was not to evaluate teachers but that it was intended to improve teaching of compositions. I also reminded them that the surveys were anonymous and that they were not asked to write their names unless they wanted to be interviewed. In fact, students seemed to be so happy to participate and express their own point of view about this topic that some of them remarked "I hope this could bring any change!"

To avoid any distraction regarding language comprehension, surveys were administered in Arabic. In addition, survey items and statements were also translated into Arabic. I also told the students that they could express their point of view in Arabic if they wanted. The language choice seemed to be highly appreciated by the students and made them feel confident in expressing their points of view. Moreover, I went through the questions with the students and explained each statement before they got started. Terms like "organization," "content," "mechanics" and "feedback" were also explained and supported by examples. The survey distribution took about 45 minutes for each of the seven classes, and that was a full class period.

### Samples of Students' Papers

In order to support the survey data and bring in evidence of the nature of teachers' feedback, 50 samples of students' papers were investigated. I felt that this source of data could give me clear insight into what feedback students think they get and what type of feedback teachers actually provide. After taking teachers' permission, I took samples of students' papers in order to look at the type of the given feedback. In addition, some teachers volunteered to submit copies of their students' writing assignments, essays, and writing exam papers. I also took some of students' writing compositions in their workbooks. I got samples of graded essays or exam papers and samples of various ungraded writing tasks in order to investigate teachers'

response to each type. To illustrate, I investigated if teachers' feedback on writing exam papers were be similar to their response to writing assignments or not. I also looked at the type and the nature of teachers' feedback on students' writing. For example, do teachers attend to both content and form? Or, do they mainly give form-based feedback? Do they comment on content and ideas, and if so, what are some of their comments? How do they deal with students' errors? In other words, what type of error feedback did they give, for instance, comprehensive versus selective and direct versus indirect error feedback? This data was collected to support questions three and five in the first section of the survey (see Appendix A1). In addition, types of positive versus negative comments or praise and criticism were also investigated.

### Interviews

The follow up interviews invited students to elaborate on some of the survey statements. In the survey, students were asked to write their names and contact information if they were interested in being interviewed. Only a few students wrote their names; however, during the survey administration, some students seemed to be very interested to discuss the issue with me. So, I conducted informal group interviews after the survey administration, in addition to the more formal interviews with the students who wrote their names. As for the informal interviews, they were conducted with the students who indicated their agreement in the survey. Also, I invited some of the students whom I knew. I decided to choose students from my school who were familiar with me so that they would feel more at ease during the interviews. I also interviewed students from the other schools (Lubabah School and Dibba School) as I believed that students might be more candid with an outsider than with the class teacher or a teacher from their school.

The total number of the interviewed students was 17. Eight students were interviewed individually while others were interviewed in a groups of three or four. Individual interviews were held in a quiet place in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere and avoid any distractors. The interviews lasted for about 15 to 25 minutes each. After getting the students' permission, some of the interviews were recorded and transcribed later. However, I decided not to record some others, especially those of shy students, as I thought the presence of the tape recorder might

result in a threatening and uncomfortable atmosphere. Instead, I jotted down their remarks and answers to my questions during the interview. Most students expressed themselves freely in Arabic, and I translated their utterances into English. I explained the purpose of the interview and made it clear that students' views will help us improve the teaching of writing compositions and adopt effective responses to students' writing. I also assured them that the recordings and their comments would remain absolutely confidential and that students' names would not be mentioned. This helped me create a safe, friendly atmosphere which encouraged them to speak honestly and frankly. Students were asked to elaborate on the statements and questions given in the survey. In addition, I asked some questions related to my research questions such as how they perceived the usefulness of the feedback, and why they chose to ignore feedback. Also, I asked questions directly related to my research questions, for example, do you think you get enough and supportive feedback? What do you do with this feedback? Do you feel encouraged by your teachers' response? Do you like your teachers to correct all of your mistakes? And which type of feedback do you prefer?

It was hoped that these three sources of data would yield useful information about how feedback on writing was perceived by the students. In addition, it might contribute to a better understanding and awareness of the current practices regarding writing feedback in UAE Schools. The data from these three sources are analyzed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to investigate students' perceptions of teachers' feedback, three sources of data were used. The first data source was the questionnaire which was administered to 130 female high school students from three schools in Fujairah. The second source was the interviews which were conducted informally with 17 students from the same schools. The third source of data, which was used to support the two previous tools, was the samples of students' writings. The data gathered from these sources were all analyzed and categorized into five sections: first, the nature of teachers' feedback as perceived by the students; second, students' perceptions of the usefulness and the value of teachers' feedback; third, students' perceptions of error corrections as feedback to their writing; fourth, students' reactions and attention regarding written feedback; and fifth, students' preferences and expectations regarding feedback on writing.

#### Nature of Teachers' Feedback as Perceived by the Students

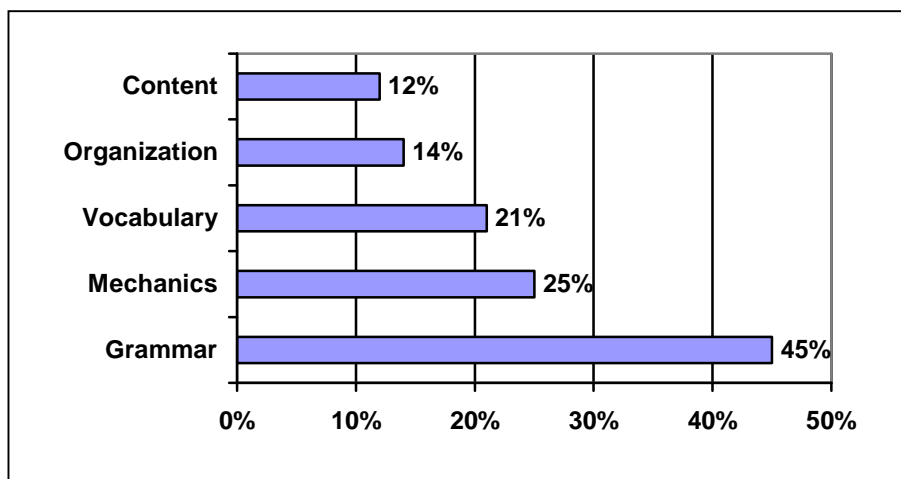
What type of feedback do students think they get? Do they get enough and supportive feedback? To answer these two questions, data were collected from the survey, students' interviews, and samples of students' papers. In the survey, students were asked to indicate the amount of corrections and comments they think they get in five aspects of writing: organization, content or ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In addition, there were nine close-ended statements designed to investigate the nature of teachers' feedback. Moreover, there were two open-ended questions intended to present examples of some of the common positive and negative comments given to the students.

Question 3, "How many of the comments and the corrections involve: organization, content or ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics?" was meant to measure the amount and type of written feedback given to the students on their writing. Results showed that more than half of the students believed that they were given little or no feedback in most aspects of writing (see Appendix C1). More specifically, 45% (58) of the students described their teachers' feedback as providing a lot of comments and corrections about grammar, 25% (33) reported that teachers



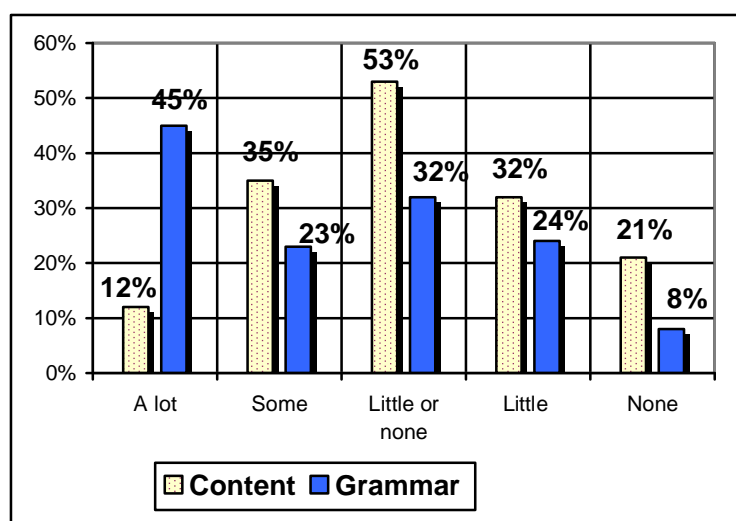
also provided them with a lot of comments about mechanics, only 21% (27) indicated that they had a lot of comments about vocabulary, and fewer reported that teachers gave many comments about organization and content (14% (18) and 12% (16) respectively) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Amount of Feedback on Students' Writing, "A lot" Option (N=130)



Students reported that a lot of corrections and comments were given on grammar compared with all of the other aspects of writing. To illustrate, 45% (58) of the students indicated that a lot of teachers' comments and corrections involved grammar, while only 8% (11) of them thought that they were not given feedback on this category. The percentage of grammar corrections of the "a lot" category was relatively high compared with the amount of corrections and comments given on content and ideas on the same scale. Only 12% (16 out of 130) of the students believed that there were a lot of comments and corrections about content and ideas, while a higher percentage of them, 32% (42), thought that they had little feedback on content, and 21% (27) of them admitted that they were not given any comments on their ideas at all (see answers to question 3 in the Appendix C). Generally speaking, results indicated that more than half of the students, 53% (69), felt that little or no feedback was given to their ideas and content, while a relatively big amount of feedback, 45% (58), was given to grammar (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Amount Feedback Given on Both Content and Grammar (N=130)



This finding conformed to the statistical results of students' response to statement 30 in the survey (see Table 2). More than half of the students, 53% (69), believed that teachers do not show interest in their ideas as their main concern is to correct grammatical mistakes. Indeed, an investigation of 50 papers of students' writing showed that error correction was the dominant type of feedback given to the students on their writing. More interestingly, grammatical mistakes were corrected, highlighted, or underlined in all of the samples without specific content related comments. In addition, error feedback related to mechanics made up a great portion of teachers' response. That is, teachers' written feedback was focused on grammar and mechanics more than any other aspects like content or organization (see Appendix D for samples). Although a small percentage of students reported that a lot of teachers' comments and corrections are about organization and content, none of the samples contained any comments or corrections about these features. This may have different interpretations: Students might have been given these comments orally, or they might not have understood what was meant by content and organization comments. Indeed, Hyland (2003) suggests that most of teachers' written feedback takes the form of in text, form-based feedback, which she calls "minimal marking" (p. 181).

There were a few general evaluative comments like "excellent," "very good," and "good." It was unclear whether those comments were related to the content, the

form, or both. This could suggest that students who got such comments might perceive them as content-based feedback. On the other hand, only one sample out of the fifty contained a general comment pertaining to the student’s ideas in the text, and it was “Good ideas! Nice start!” (see Sample 1 in Appendix D). However, this sample included mostly form-focused feedback, as the teacher highlighted and corrected all of the grammatical and mechanical mistakes. In addition to focusing on grammatical and mechanical errors, some teachers often provided vague and abstract responses that may not help students revise their texts. Comments like “Why?” “What is this?” “Usage,” and “Rewrite carefully” do not explain or inform students of the problems that need to be fixed. Another more problematic issue was when nothing was provided except for underlining and a fixed mark (see Sample 4 & 5 in Appendix D).

Given some features of teachers’ feedback on samples of students’ papers, I believe it is important to see how students perceive their teachers’ feedback on their writing. Some of these perceptions can be revealed through investigation of their responses to the close-ended statements (see Table 2).

Table 2. Nature of Teachers’ Feedback (N=130)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
4	The feedback I receive is clearly written and easy to read	90 (69%)	40 (31%)
5	Teachers make only negative comments on my paper.	39 (30%)	91 (70%)
9	Teachers do not give enough feedback on my writing.	104 (80%)	26 (20%)
10	My teacher’s comments should be very motivating.	125 (96%)	5 (4%)
11	Teachers’ feedback rarely provides me with useful suggestions for improvement.	97 (75%)	33 (26%)
12	Constructive criticism is needed to know how to improve.	103 (79%)	27 (21%)
15	I have thought of giving up writing when I get negative feedback.	50 (39%)	80 (62%)
17	Teachers’ comments are only underlining and crossing out.	57 (44%)	73 (56%)
20	Teachers rarely give useful comments.	78 (60%)	52 (40%)
30	Teachers do not show interest in my ideas, as they correct mostly grammar.	69 (53%)	61 (47%)

Students' responses to the close-ended statements revealed that they really felt that they were not given enough comprehensive feedback on their writing. 80% (104) of them agreed that teachers do not give enough feedback on their compositions, while only 20% (26) believed that feedback given on their compositions was enough (see Figure 3). Interviews with the 17 students revealed some more insight into this statement. Only 12% (2) of the students' felt that the teachers' comments and feedback seemed to be enough while 88% (15) of the interviewed students believed that more feedback needed to be given. One of them remarked, "The teacher does not pay attention to this. Her remarks and comments are very few, if any." Another student emphasized, "It is all underlining and crossing out. No real comments are given." In a group interview of three students, one student remarked, "I believe that the given corrections and comments on my composition are not really sufficient." When I asked her to explain, she gave an example that reflected her need for comprehensive feedback that addresses all aspects of her essay and not only grammar and spelling. She noted, "Sometimes I write a good introduction, but the teacher never comments on it. She does not even pay attention to it. Even when I do not write one, she does not say that I need to write an introduction." Another student added, "Her comments are on errors. It's all grammatical corrections." A student from grade 12 did not seem to be satisfied with only grammatical and spelling corrections on her composition and noted that the teacher's feedback on her writing had ignored her efforts in the use of vocabulary. She commented, "I spend time using the dictionary searching for new vocabulary words that can help me express my ideas, but the teacher does not say anything about them....Sometimes she circles the words with a question mark."

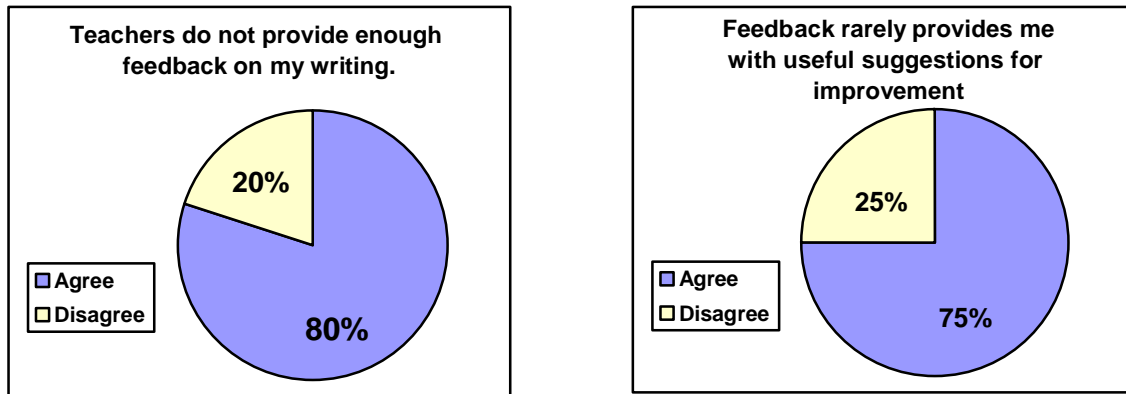
In an individual interview, one of the honor students highlighted her need for comments about organization. She noted, "Spelling comments and corrections are enough, but there are other things in the essay not commented on, like the words used for explanation such as actually, in fact,... the use of connective words, and the style." She explained that the teacher does not provide feedback on this part and "focuses more on spelling and grammar." The student's comments showed a high level of awareness of the lack of certain types of feedback on her writing, and her desire for comprehensive feedback that addresses her ideas, her style of writing, and some

organizational features of her composition. It is noteworthy that this student rates her writing composition skills as “excellent.” To check the credibility of her response, I referred to the school records and found out that she used to be in a private school for six years before she moved to Al Raheeb Public School, and she was an A<sup>+</sup> student.

On the other hand, few students seemed to be satisfied with the amount of corrections and comments on their writing. I interviewed one of the students who indicated her disagreement to statement 9, “Teachers do not provide enough feedback on my writing,” in order to have clear insight into her perception. She said, “Compared with last year, I guess yes, I get enough feedback on my writing from my teacher.” She indicated that she used to have a teacher who never gave any feedback on her writing as “it was all underlining and crossing out.” She remarked, “This year, I have a teacher who cares and pays more attention to what I write.” An interview with another student revealed her misconception of what makes enough feedback. Because error correction was the only type of feedback she used to get, she believed that the feedback she got is comprehensive enough as the teacher “corrects all of her spelling and grammar mistakes.”

Most likely students’ perceptions were based on the teachers’ feedback pattern given over various compositions. The nature of this feedback in which the focus was primarily on grammar and mechanics would conform to the pattern of feedback reported in the literature, which is the extensive attention to surface level--namely mechanics and grammar--over others. Cohen and Cavalacanti (1990) suggest that this behavior of response could reflect a form of bias in teachers’ feedback to students’ writing, for example, a conception that certain students have certain types of problems that need to be commented on. Indeed, focusing mainly on grammar and mechanics may deprive certain students-- especially low performers-- of types of feedback that could be beneficial to them, for example, support in the use of vocabulary and organization. Those students may even benefit more from extensive interactive sessions with the teacher.

Figure 3. Responses of Students to Statements 9 &11 (N=130)



Students' responses to statement 11, "Teachers' feedback rarely provides me with useful suggestions for improvement," revealed another striking fact regarding students' perceptions about the nature of teachers' feedback on their writing. Three quarters, 75% (97), of the students believed that teachers' feedback rarely provides them with useful suggestions that could help them improve their writing (see Figure 3). Moreover, 60% (78) agreed that teachers rarely give useful comments on students' compositions. To dig deeper into this perception, I interviewed a group of four students, and they all agreed that they rarely got comments involving suggestions, guidelines, or informative feedback about their strengths or weaknesses. It is interesting to note that the four students interviewed had just been given their marked essays of the diagnostic test. As I discussed the statement with them, one of the students remarked in a protesting tone, "I got zero on my composition. The whole text is underlined. I do not even know why." Another student explained, "The teacher does not write useful comments that could explain why I got this mark. In some cases, I ask her and she may explain it." Another student commented that the teacher highlights and corrects her grammar and spelling mistakes, but rarely gives suggestions about how to improve future essays. On the other hand, one of the interviewed students felt that her teacher's feedback provided her with useful suggestions and made her aware of certain problems in her writing. However, she noted that it happened only when she got the chance to discuss the paper with the teacher orally, as "her response on the paper does not tell anything."

Students' responses to statement 17, "Teachers' comments are only underlining and crossing out," helps to explain the previous statement and may help us understand why some students believe that they were rarely given useful comments. More than a third of the students, 44% (57), agreed that the teachers' response to their compositions was only underlining and crossing out. In fact, because of the word "only," I expected that a very low percentage of them would agree with this statement. However, some students in the interview dismissed this assumption and confirmed that they often receive their papers full of underlining and crossing out, beside some occasional ticks. Another student commented, "Not always mere underlining, as there are also some corrections and maybe a one word comment." Interestingly, the majority of the collected samples had only underlining and a mark. In few of them, the teacher indicated two types of mistake by using two symbols "sp" and "str," which apparently indicated spelling and structure (see Sample 3 in Appendix D).

Statistical results of statement four, "The feedback I receive is clearly written and easy to read," showed that about a third of the participants thought they have difficulty in reading teachers' comments, while 69% (90) believed that the corrections and comments made on their compositions are clear and easy to read. Interviews with some of the participants revealed some interesting findings. In her response to my question, "Do you benefit from teachers' comments and corrections on your composition?" one student blamed the teacher's unclear handwriting for her not making the most use of all of the comments on her paper. She commented, "She writes very quickly. I can hardly figure what she writes." It is important to note that "the teachers' handwriting" was the most dominant answer for the open-ended question, "Are there any comments or corrections that you do not understand?" However, interestingly enough, one of the students noted, "They are easy to read because they are all underlining and short comments."

As praise and criticism were an important aspect of the nature of teachers' feedback as reviewed in the literature, I believed that it was important to investigate the nature of UAE high school teachers' feedback with regard to praise and criticism. First, I think it is helpful to investigate students' expectations regarding their teachers' comments. In fact, students' response to statement 10, "My teachers' comments

should be motivating,” showed that an overwhelming majority of 96% (125) expected that teachers’ comments should be positive and motivating. However, students’ response to statement five, “Teachers make only negative comments on my paper,” revealed that only 69% (90) of the students disagreed with it, while approximately one-third of the students’ believed that they had only negative comments as feedback on their writing. Interestingly enough, this percentage was consistent with result from question five in the open-ended questions (see Appendix A2). When asked to provide examples of positive comments, 30% of the students remarked that they had not got any positive remarks from their teachers on their writing. They claimed that they got purely negative feedback on their compositions in answer to question five, “Are any of your teacher’s comments positive? If so, write an example.” One student wrote, “No, I do not know why she does not write any. She never writes any positive comments, not even once.” Another student wrote, “No, just red lines which I do not understand the reason behind.”

On the other hand, students wrote examples of some of the positive comments they got on their writing like, good, very good, excellent, well done, nice handwriting, keep up, and smiley faces. In the interviews, students told me that they highly appreciated positive comments from the teacher and regarded them as the most beneficial aspect of teachers’ feedback. They remarked that the teachers’ positive comments encourage them to write more and feel good about their writing. However, one student seemed to be dissatisfied with this type of positive comments as she wrote, “Only good.” Another student noted, “I get good every time although I feel that my composition is much better than before.” Students were also asked to provide examples of what they perceived as negative comments. Their answers varied and included comments of criticism and blame, such as “Weak!” “Bad handwriting,” “Do you call this a paragraph?” “Foolish!,” “What is this?” question marks, and a big X on the composition. In addition, there were other negative comments noted by the students. For example, one student wrote, “When she asks me to re-write the composition or when she writes that the composition is not good.” Another student wrote, “When she does not care about what I wanted to say and is always criticizing.”

Could negative feedback and criticism cause negative attitudes toward writing and discourage students from writing? Data analysis of statement 15, “I have thought



of giving up writing when I get negative feedback,” indicated that more than a third, 39% (50), of the students had considered giving up writing because of receiving negative feedback on their compositions. However, 62% (80) thought that negative feedback would not stop them from writing. Students’ interviews brought some insight into this statement. One student remarked, “I used to write expressing my ideas with my own writing, but I got the whole essay crossed out and criticized, and of course I got very low marks because it was full of mistakes.” When asked why she said “used to” she replied, “I rarely write now, especially in the exam. I memorize a model essay and I get higher marks and a very few grammatical mistakes.” Another one responded that the best way to get high mark is to memorize. She added, “I wrote once and the teacher did not like it. She scolded me because of my bad writing. I can’t write well.”

It appears that overwhelming students with criticism and negative comments may cause them to stop writing attempts as well as lose self-confidence. In addition, students who lack positive and encouraging comments may feel disappointed and neglected. A student from grade 12 wrote that the teacher respected her and never gave too much criticism on her composition, but she also did not encourage her or show any interest, and this made her “hate English, and writing in particular.” On the other hand, interviews with high achieving students showed that the teachers’ criticism did not seem to be a problem for them. On the contrary, one student remarked, “Criticism is a challenge for me to do my best.” More surprisingly, one of the students indicated her view of positive comments and said, “I do not care about praise. If [the teacher] said that my paragraph was excellent, I would not do anything to improve it, but if I got some critical comments ... I would be aware of my mistakes and would try my best to improve it.”

Students’ awareness of the usefulness of constructive criticism was clearly shown in their response to statement 12, “Constructive criticism is needed to know how to improve.” The majority, 79% (103), of the students acknowledged their need for constructive criticism in order to improve their writing, while only 21% (27) thought that they could not stand criticism. It is interesting to report that constructive criticism was highly recommended and welcomed by most of the interviewed students. In an interview with a group of four students, all of the interviewees

highlighted the role of praise and criticism in teachers' feedback. One of them remarked, "I believe that praise and criticism are the most important things in teachers' feedback." Indeed, it seems that praise and criticism are very influential in shaping students' attitudes towards teachers' feedback and writing activities.

Overall, both the survey and the interviews, along with data from samples of students' papers, revealed that students were not given comprehensive informative feedback on their compositions. Indeed, the results suggested that the students want more feedback across all aspects of writing than the teachers are giving.

### Students' Perceptions of Error Corrections

Because response to errors was the main feature of teachers' feedback on students' writing, I believed it was important to investigate students' perceptions and attitudes toward this type of feedback. To achieve this purpose, data were collected from surveys and interviews, with reference to samples of students' papers. Question five in the first section of the survey (see Appendix A2) was intended to investigate students' attitudes toward the type of error correction used. Students were asked to choose the most frequent method of error correction used by their teachers in response to their errors. In addition, there were four close-ended statements to investigate students' attitudes and perception toward error correction in general and certain types of error feedback (see Table 3).

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Error Corrections (N=130)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
8	I like my teacher to correct my grammatical mistakes.	117 (90%)	13 (10%)
22	I learn most when my teacher highlights my grammatical mistakes.	122 (94%)	8 (6%)
26	I learn better when my teacher writes the correct answer for me.	107 (82%)	23 (18%)
28	I prefer that my teacher points out my mistakes and I correct it by myself.	99 (76%)	31 (24%)

Data analysis of question five (see Appendix A2) indicated that underlining was the most used method of error feedback. Some students chose two methods because they felt that they were used equally. Overall analysis showed that exactly half of the students, 50% (65), reported that teachers usually underline their errors.

22% (29) indicated that the teacher usually highlights the type of error they make, and more than a third, 44% (57), reported that the teacher writes the correct answer for them when they make an error. Indeed, an investigation of samples of students' papers showed that underlining the error was the most dominant type of error feedback (see Appendix D). In most samples, different types of errors were all underlined without indication of its type. However, in some papers the errors were underlined with codes like "Sp," "Str," or "C" to indicate its type, i.e. spelling, structure, and capitalization. On the other hand, in other samples, teachers did not only fail to comment on incorrect forms but in fact did not even acknowledge any awareness of them. In some samples, the form of feedback was direct correction of the error. The students' incorrect sentences were deleted or underlined and the correct form of the sentence was written.

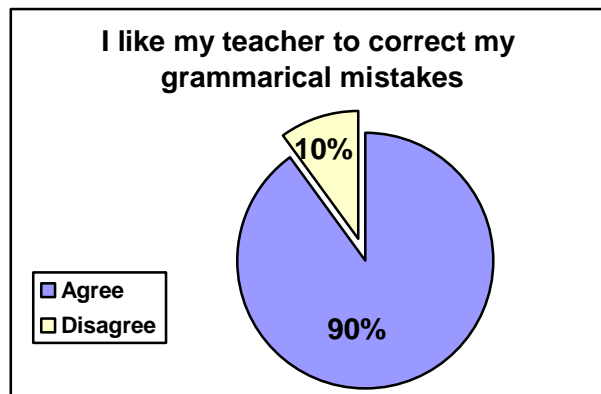
In his study, Leki (1991) noted that underlined errors was perceived as a of "puzzle" for learners (p. 4). I wondered how UAE high school students perceive this method of error feedback on their writing. Data from interviews and the open-ended question, "Are there any of the comments and corrections that you do not understand?" confirmed that the teachers' underlining was a real "puzzle" for most students in this study too. As an answer for the open-ended question, many students wrote that underling words and sentences without giving any clues was the main reason for not understanding teachers' corrections. For example, one student wrote, "When the teacher underlines a word ... I do not know the reason behind this underlining." Another student wrote, "Yes, like underlining a certain sentence without giving a comment that could help us understand why and what should we correct." Another student confirmed, "Because she underlines the words and I do not understand what my mistake is." She further explained her confusion: "At the end of the word, she draws a line and I do not know whether she means the word should be singular or plural, or if it is a spelling mistake."

In the interviews, this indirect feedback seemed to cause confusion, especially for students of poor writing skills. One student explained her problem in dealing with this type of response. She said, "I do not know what to fix if the whole essay is underlined." Another student remarked, "I get confused by my teachers' underlining because she sometimes underlines the whole paragraph without specific error

indication.” A student from grade 12 talked about her experience with this type of feedback: “I used to get underlined sentences and get confused if my mistakes were only spelling, or grammar, punctuation, or word choice.” On the other hand, some students seemed to be in favor with this type of response, because it involved them in critical thinking. One student even seemed to be familiar with her teacher’s method of response. She said, “It must be either a grammatical or spelling mistake. I like to think about it and find out myself.” Another student said, “It would be better if clues or comments were given, but underlining could make me inquire about what went wrong and how it should be corrected.”

Students’ responses to the close-ended statements revealed very interesting findings regarding grammar correction (see Table 3). Approximately 90% (117) of the respondents were in favor of having their grammatical mistakes corrected, while 10% (13) disliked it when the teacher corrected their grammatical mistakes on their compositions (see Figure 4). In terms of learning, 94% (122) of the students believed that they learn most when the teacher highlights their grammatical mistakes, and only 6% (8) disagreed. It is interesting to note that students place a high value on grammar corrections, especially when given in writing assignments. The interviews revealed some of these students’ assumptions regarding grammar correction and writing. Students from grade 12 explained why grammatical accuracy is highly required and correction is so important on their writing assignments. One student said, “Grammar is everything in writing.” In answer to my request for explanation, she replied, “If I have only one grammatical mistake in my sentence, the whole sentence will be wrong and therefore I will get a very bad mark.” Another student nodded her head in agreement and added, “Teachers reduce marks if the composition has grammar mistakes.” Another student confirmed, “Grammar and spelling are the most important thing in writing. If [the teacher] does not focus on them my writing will be bad.”

Figure 4. Students' Perceptions about Grammar Correction (N=130)



This concern about grammatical correctness seemed to be an obstacle for writing fluency for some students. One of the interviewed students admitted, "It is better to write a short accurate essay than a long essay full of grammatical mistakes." Another student referred unintentionally to the type of feedback she got and noted, "The teacher won't ask us to elaborate, because that means making more mistakes." It is interesting to note that one student even described writing and responding to the teachers' feedback as "a grammar activity." It seems that overemphasizing grammar correction may also cause some students to lose interest and perceive that writing activities are mainly meant to teach grammar. In an interview, one student remarked:

It is all about grammar. The teacher gives us many grammar exercises and our book is full of grammar activities. We study grammar and our teachers' comments on our writing are also about grammar....It becomes boring. Rewriting the paper and responding to the teacher's comments is a grammar activity too....I do not like to revise the paper. No need since I can work on other grammar activities.

However, in spite of the apparent focus on grammar in teachers' feedback, students still demand it and feel it is essential to have this type of feedback on their compositions. A student from grade 11 explained the reason behind her interest in the teacher's correction, saying, "I need to know my mistakes in order to avoid them in future essays." Another student explained, "I would like to know if the essay that I wrote is accurate and could be a good model for the writing exam." This concern about having accurate model essays for the exam seemed to be one of the motivating factors behind students' interest in teachers' feedback.

Providing direct corrective feedback seemed to be a favorable method of error response for the students. Indeed, 82% (107) thought that they learn better when the teacher writes the correct answer for them, whereas only 18% (23) believed that they would not learn most from this type of error feedback. One student who was in favor of this response explained that she will feel confident about her composition, “because the correct form provided by the teacher is the best model.” Another student indicated that this way of response is much better than underlining the sentence, because at least she will know exactly what the mistake is. Two students found this type of response very accessible in terms of revision. One of them said, “Providing the correct form of the sentence saves time and effort when rewriting the essay.” They commented that this feedback would not require referring to a grammar book or a dictionary to look for the correct answer. However, one student commented, “When the teacher writes the correct answer, I just read what she wrote. I do not think that there is a need to rewrite the paper.” In addition, an interviewed student explained that this type of direct feedback is very beneficial as she usually compares her own sentence with that of the teacher in order to examine what went wrong with her sentence. On the other hand, one student disagreed that this feedback could help her learn better, and believed that the teacher should give her “the chance to think about the answer.” More interestingly, she pointed out that “if the teacher is going to delete my sentence and write another one, I will learn more if she tells me why my sentence is not acceptable.” Indeed, some students seemed to refuse this kind of correction on their composition if no reason or explanation were given.

Students’ responses to statement 28, “I prefer that my teacher points out my mistake and I correct it by myself,” confirmed that a big number of students prefer to correct their mistakes by themselves with the help of teachers’ hints. To be more precise, 76% (99) of the participants preferred that the teachers point out their mistakes and they correct them by themselves, while only 24% (31) thought that other methods of response were more suitable for them. In the interviews, I found that this type of feedback was preferable for strong students, while weak students felt that highlighting or underlining errors would not always help them identify its type. One of the interviewed students remarked, “I like my teacher to underline my errors, but I would like her to explain what those errors are.” Another student remarked, “I’m very

good at grammar. I can fix some of those errors myself if the teacher indicated them precisely.” It seems that some students felt that errors were not indicated accurately, because, as noted previously, some of them reported that teachers usually underline the whole paragraph without any specific error indication.

Overall analysis of this section showed that error correction was highly valued by the students. The majority of them were in favor of correcting grammatical mistakes and felt that it is essential for language learning in general and writing in particular. In addition, they seemed to appreciate teachers’ direct error correction. Finally, the data analysis indicates that they believe that it is important to develop a sense of autonomy in their texts with the help of the teacher.

#### Students’ Perceptions of the Usefulness of Teachers’ Feedback

Gunn and Raven (2005) ask, “Is teacher feedback useful?” (p. 265). In his study, Weaver (2006) also addresses the same issue and seeks an answer for his research question in his article; “Do students value feedback?” I believe that one way of weighing the usefulness and value of teachers’ feedback is to investigate students’ perceptions about it. So, “Is teacher feedback useful?” was the main question posed to students in this section.

There were seven close-ended statements (see Table 4) and one open-ended question in the survey designed to investigate students’ perceptions regarding the usefulness of teachers’ feedback. To begin with, the usefulness of teachers’ feedback was addressed directly by the students’ answers to the open-ended question, “Do you feel that your instructor’s comments and corrections help you to improve your composition writing skills?”

Table 4. Students’ Perceptions of the Usefulness of Teachers’ Feedback (N=130)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
6	Feedback on writing is very useful and helpful.	112 (86%)	18 (14%)
7	My teacher’s feedback on my writing encourages me to write more	103 (79%)	27 (21%)
13	Feedback on my writing encourages me to improve.	117 (90%)	13 (10%)
14	Teachers’ feedback is too uninformative or brief to be helpful.	54 (42%)	76 (58%)
16	Feedback on my writing helps me reflect on what I have learned.	115 (89%)	15 (12%)

In their response to the open-ended question, “Do you feel that your instructor’s comments and corrections help you to improve your composition writing skills?” most of the students replied in the affirmative. Some of them even confirmed their strong agreement saying, “Of course, yes,” “Definitely yes,” or “Sure.” On the other hand, some of the students felt that feedback given on writing does not help them improve their writing skills. They even showed their strong disagreement with different responses such as “Of course not,” “Definitely not,” or “Not at all.” Moreover, some students wrote that they believe that teachers’ feedback helps them improve their writing skills only “sometimes.” On closer statistical analysis, 78% (102) confirmed their belief that teachers’ comments and corrections help them improve their writing skills, while 22% (28) reported that such corrections and comments do not help in improving their writing skills.

Students’ answers to the open-ended question provided qualitative data that revealed some of their thoughts regarding the usefulness of teachers’ feedback on writing. Most of the students indicated the role that feedback could play in encouraging them to write. One of them wrote, “Yes, because it is like a trigger that encourages me to achieve progress.” In addition, one student remarked, “It encourages the students to work hard in order to get better marks.” Another student acknowledged the role of feedback in creating “a sense of competitiveness.” Moreover, one student thought that teachers’ feedback helps her improve her writing, especially the grammar. Another student commented that it contributes to the development of her writing skill because she corrects her mistakes herself. Finally, a big number of students indicated that feedback on their writing helps them improve their writing skill because it helps them avoid errors.

On the other hand, some students felt that teachers’ feedback is useless and cannot help them improve their writing skills. For instance, one of them wrote, “No it does not help, because I do not benefit from my mistakes.” Another student confirmed, “It does not help me because I do not know what my mistakes are,” while another student wrote, “No, because she does not explain the error.” One student explained why she thought that her teacher’s feedback is useless. She said, “Not that much, because she usually writes the correct answer for me without giving me the chance to think about it. Sometimes I do not understand her correction, or why it was

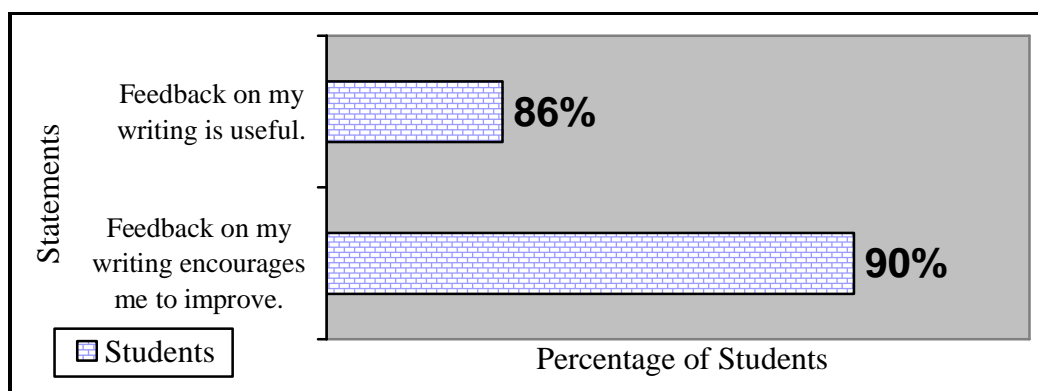


corrected that way.” Another student indicated that her teacher’s comments were too general and lacking in details. She emphasized, “One or two word notes on the paper did not help or explain much.” Many of the students’ responses indicated that teachers’ comments focused mainly on weakness and did not provide advice or suggestions. More interestingly, one student revealed her negative attitude toward writing in general and teachers’ feedback in particular. Her answer was, “No, because I ignore them. I hate writing.” Unexpectedly, one students’ response expressed strong hostility toward her teacher’s feedback: “Not at all. I feel insulted by her response to my compositions.” It is noteworthy that one student indicated that teachers’ feedback is useful just because “it does not make fun of my mistakes.”

Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996) notice that “learners’ perceptions about what constitutes useful feedback vary considerably according to the educational context and students’ level of literacy” (p. 295). As earlier data analysis revealed, the focus of teachers’ feedback is on grammar errors (see Question 3 in Appendix C1). This may have contributed to the students’ perceptions and attitudes toward what makes feedback useful. Most students’ assumptions about the usefulness of teachers’ feedback revolve around its role in improving grammar and avoiding errors or improving writing accuracy. This assumption can be clearly inferred in some students’ answers. For example, one of the students wrote, “Yes, because it helps me to study for the exam and write accurate and correct sentences.” Another student also said, “It helps me correct my grammatical mistakes.”

The five close-ended statements in the survey conveyed quantitative data about students’ perceptions of the usefulness of teachers’ feedback. Indeed, the majority of the students believed in the usefulness of teachers’ feedback. About 86% (112) of the students agreed that teachers’ feedback is very useful and helpful, while only 14% (18) disagreed. In addition, the majority stated that it plays an important role in encouraging them to improve their writing skill. 90% (117) confirmed that providing feedback on their writing encourages them to improve this skill, whereas only 10% (13) believed that it has no effect (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Feedback on Writing (N=130)



Indeed, most of the interviewed students highlighted their belief that teachers' feedback on their compositions is useful and essential. However, their comments revolved around "mistakes" and "grammar." One student remarked, "It is useful because the teacher corrects all of my mistakes." Another student made a similar point and emphasized, "It helps me realize the error and avoid it." Other students' comments implied that teacher' feedback could be more helpful. Some of the interviewed students seemed to be dissatisfied, as most of the feedback they received is not always encouraging. One student indicated that the teachers' comments are very helpful if they are positive. She said, "Her responses are positive sometimes, and they encourage the students to write." It is noteworthy that some students also perceived teachers' feedback as a useful tool to do better in the writing exam. One student noted, "It helps me study for the exam and get accurate and correct sentences," while another student thought that teachers' feedback is useful only for the assignment at hand and may not be helpful for other compositions. Other students thought that teachers' feedback was meant to improve certain aspects of language. For instance, one student remarked, "It helps me improve my spelling," while another indicated, "It helps me enhance my writing, especially grammar."

In their response to statement 16, 89% (115) agreed that teachers' feedback on their compositions helps them reflect on what they have learned, while 12% (15) disagreed. In the interviews, most students indicated that the teachers' corrections and comments on their writing helps them review some of the grammatical rules they have learned. One student remarked, "Sometimes I know the rule but I fail to apply it in my writing. Highlighting my errors draws my attention to them and makes me

aware of them next time.” Another student remarked, “When I rewrite the paper, I correct all of the spelling mistakes pointed out. I think teachers’ feedback helps me revise the vocabulary that I have learned.” Based on the feedback they get, students’ concern was almost exclusively on grammar and spelling. Students perceived teachers’ feedback to be useful with regards to “spelling” and “grammar”; however, they did not comment on how teachers’ feedback helps them in other features of writing such as organization, the development of ideas and content and.

Although 90% (117) of the students believed that teachers’ feedback encourages them to improve, only 79% (103) of the students admitted that feedback on their writing encourages them to write more, while 21% (27) thought that having feedback on their composition would not encourage them to write more. An interview with a student from grade 12 brought some insight on how teachers’ feedback could affect students’ motivation and attitudes toward writing. Her previous teachers did not give much feedback; however, her teacher this year provides feedback on all aspects of writing, not just grammar. She indicated that having corrections and comments on her paper indicates that her teacher “cares” about her. She said, “Maybe because I missed this type of response on my writing in the previous years, I feel it really encouraged me to write.” She added, “I like writing because it is a way through which I can express myself and my ideas, but I was concerned about making grammatical and spelling mistakes.” She reported that her concern for accuracy would make her hesitant to write long essays, especially since her teacher in grade 11 did not show as much interest in her ideas she did about spotting all of her errors. “My teacher’s feedback this year encourages me to write more, because the teacher shows interest in my ideas as well as corrects my errors.” She pointed out that she likes to write more than one draft of the same composition, and sometimes she even writes more than one version of the same topic to see what the teacher will say about them. However, interviewed students from another class in grade 12 felt that not all feedback on their compositions would help. They explained that sometimes having so much criticism about their essays would not encourage them to rewrite the paper.

In spite of the statistical facts which showed that a very high percentage of students believed in the usefulness and value of teachers’ feedback on their writing, more than a third of the participants, 42% (54), agreed that the feedback they receive

is too uninformative and brief to be helpful, while 58% (76) of them disagreed. One of the students explained, “It is useful to know about your mistakes, but the teacher’s written feedback does not explain or provide suggestions.” Another student indicated, “The teachers’ response in most cases is one or two words.” One student commented, “I got only underlined paper with a mark.”

All in all, results indicated that these UAE high school students value teachers’ feedback and believe in its usefulness in improving their writing skill. They also indicated that the teachers’ feedback on their compositions could play an essential role in motivating them to write. However, some of them admitted that the comments and corrections they get are too brief and uninformative to be of use, and that teachers’ feedback could be more helpful. Based on their responses, feedback is seen to encourage mostly grammar than any other aspect of writing.

#### Students’ Attention and Reaction to Teachers’ Written Feedback

What do students do with teachers’ feedback? To answer this question, data was collected from both the survey and the interviews. As for the survey, there were three close-ended questions designed to investigate the amount of teachers’ comments the students read and think about, and the amount of attention given to corrections and comments on certain aspects of writing. In addition, there were five close-ended statements designed to investigate the students’ perceptions and attitudes towards revision and reading teachers’ comments (see Table 5). Moreover, there were three open-ended questions to investigate students’ reaction to teachers’ feedback in more detail.

Table 5. Students’ Attention and Reaction Regarding Written Feedback (N=130)

No	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	I like to rewrite my paper after it has been marked.	87 67%	43 33%
2	I respond well when the teachers demonstrate in their comments that they have made a real effort to understand my point.	114 88%	16 13%
3	I cannot understand my teacher’s comments because they use obscure jargon or abbreviations.	68 52%	62 48%
18	I do not read teacher’s comments in most cases.	71 55%	59 45%
19	I do not know how to deal with my teacher’s comments.	87 69%	43 33%

Question 1 in the survey, “How much of each composition do you read over again when your teacher returns it to you?” was meant to investigate if students read teachers’ comments and how much of each composition they read. Results indicated that the same percentage of students chose “All” and “Most,” 16% (21) each. That is, about a third of the students, 32% (42), admitted that they read all or most of the composition when the teacher returns it to them, while more than half of the students, 51% (66), indicated that they read only some. On the other hand, only 17% (22) reported that they never read the composition. When asked, “How many of your teacher’s comments and corrections do you think about carefully?” 47% (61) of the students reported that they think about all or most of teachers’ comments and corrections, and more than a third, 35% (46), indicated that they think about only some of the corrections, whereas 18% (23) admitted that they never think about teachers’ corrections and comments.

Interviews with the students about their attention to teachers’ feedback were very informative. The majority of the interviewed students indicated that they like to read their teachers’ comments and corrections on their papers. However, this interest in teachers’ feedback seemed to have different interpretations. Some students appeared truly eager to read their teachers’ comments and corrections, and said they definitely read all of the corrections and comments on their papers. This concern could be out of curiosity, as indicated by one of the students: “I would like to know what the teacher said about my essay.” Some students, especially strong ones, seemed to highly value teachers’ corrections on their papers and even felt frustrated if teachers did not give the papers back, or even returned them late. Some students indicated that they pay more attention to the corrections if the topic of the essay is one of the main topics in the textbook and they could be asked to write a similar composition in the exam. Students’ concern about having their papers corrected could be related to the pressure of the writing assessment which places high emphasis on accuracy, and the nature of the writing instructions that overemphasizes writing form. This concern was clearly stated in one of the students’ comments: “I have to know about my mistakes in order to avoid them in the exam.”

On the other hand, some students admitted that because of the nature of the feedback they receive, they believe that reading teachers' response to their composition makes no sense. One student indicated, "It is all underlining and crossing out. I throw the paper away." Another student responded sarcastically, "If she writes comments, I will read them." Another student indicated that the comments given on the essay are not interesting because they are all the same and that she could even predict what the teacher will write on her paper. Those responses conformed to their response to statement 18 in the survey (see Table 5). More than half of the students, 55% (71), indicated that they do not read teachers' comments in most cases, whereas 45% (59) disagreed with the statement.

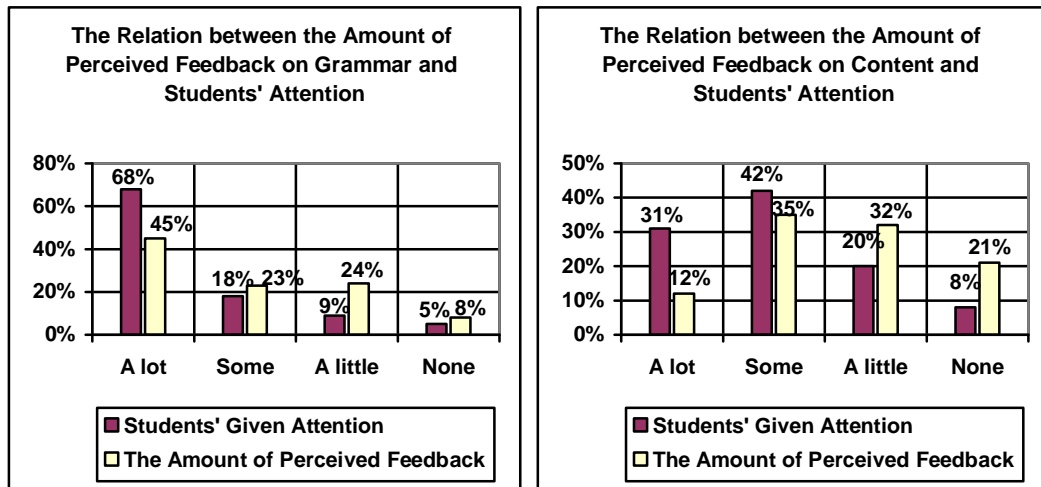
However, students seemed to have different perspectives and attitudes regarding their teachers' feedback and writing skills in general. Realizing the fact that they have to write about a new topic in the CEPA exam, some students from grade 12 seemed to be more aware of the need to improve their writing skills. It seems that they have realized the importance of reading their teachers' corrections and revising their papers. One student commented, "I do care about the teachers' feedback on my writing; I revise the paper and try to practice writing because I have to improve my writing skill." She illustrated, "We did not used to get feedback on our writing last years, simply because we did not used to write, just copy. This year, we cannot tell which topic we may write about in the CEPA exam." Another student also remarked that she reads all of her compositions when the teacher returns them to her. She stated, "I think carefully about the corrections and I rewrite the paper, if needed." More interestingly, when asked if she always pays such attention to teacher's feedback in all of her composition, she said, "Sometimes when there are no comments or few errors pointed out, I do not revise the essay." A student from grade 11 reported that she does not revise her essay when she feels that the topic is not important. In response to my request for clarification, she said, "If I'm going to be tested on the same topic in the exam, I pay more attention to the composition and make sure that I have it corrected and revised."

Students' attention to certain comments was addressed in question 4, "How much attention do your pay to the comments and corrections involving organization, content/ideas, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics?" Of interest was the higher

percentage of the “a lot” response to the grammar comments (approximately 68%), compared to the lower percentage of “none” response (5%). Besides, the majority of students either chose “a lot” or “some” in terms of the amount of attention paid to the written feedback given in all categories (see Appendix C1). This indicates that there was a sustained interest by the students towards the written feedback given by the teachers about their compositions. However, data analysis of question 3 and 4 (see Appendix C ) called attention to an apparent mismatch between what feedback students think they get and type of feedback they pay attention to. When asked about the amount of corrections the teachers give in mechanics, content, organization, and grammar, in most categories, the highest percentage was given for “little” and “none” responses, except for grammar and mechanics. However, when asked about the attention the students give to those categories, the majority of them chose either “a lot” or “some.” For example, 21% of the students reported that none of teachers’ corrections and comments involved content and ideas, and 32% indicated that they were given few comments about content, whereas nearly a third of them reported that they pay a lot of attention to such feedback. Students’ responses in the interviews correspond to this finding. Indeed, the majority of the interviewed students agreed that they pay a lot of attention to content comments. One of them remarked, “I like to have comments about my ideas in the text, because it encourages me to write.”

On the other hand, the highest percentage of corrections given by the teachers was for the “a lot” response in grammar corrections (about 45%). Interestingly, students thought that they give more attention to grammar corrections than what, as they reported, the teachers provided. To illustrate, a higher percentage, 68%, of students reported that they pay a lot of attention to grammar corrections (see Figure 6). This indicates that students’ attention and interest to the given feedback might be affected by their teachers’ writing instructions. That is, when teachers focus primarily on grammar or spelling, students may feel that their focus should be on grammar in teachers’ feedback. This corresponds to Zamel’s (1985) notion responding mainly on local concerns “creates in the students a rather limited notion of composing” (p. 81).

Figure 6. The Relation between the Amount of Perceived Feedback and Students' Attention (N=130)



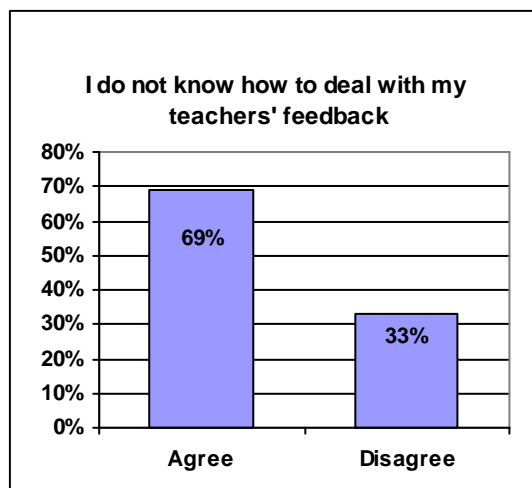
Students' responses to the close-ended statements provided some interesting facts about their reaction to teachers' feedback. In their response to statement 2, 88% (114) confirmed that they respond well to teachers' comments if teachers seem to be interested in their point. In fact, the purpose of that statement was to examine students' tendency to respond to the comments given on their compositions. Indeed, one of the interviewed students indicated that when she had only a few corrections and underlines in her paper, she just made the corrections on the paper without revising the whole essay. However, she noted if the teachers' feedback provided some suggestions and critical comments, she would revise the paper and take those comments into consideration. This student's comments, in addition to students' answers to statement 2, indicate that students' conceptions of revision may have been affected by the instructions they receive regarding revision.

Data analysis of statement 19, "I do not know how to deal with my teacher's comments," revealed striking results. About 69% (87) of the students did not know how to handle teachers' feedback on their compositions, while only 33% (43) thought they could deal with teachers' corrections and comments on their essays (see Figure 7). As noted in the previous section, this could be related to the nature of teachers' feedback which seemed to be unclear for some students. Besides the underlining, some students also complained about the teachers' handwriting. They also indicated that sometimes they cannot deal with certain comments like "Why?" or a question



mark, or “Rewrite carefully.” Some students reported that they could not know how to fix certain errors because they were not indicated exactly. As an answer to the open-ended question, “Are there any comments or corrections that you do not understand?” one student wrote the following example: “When the teacher writes a word in the margin and I do not know where it should fit. Also, when she draws arrows and makes me confused.” Of interest, some students seemed to find this question rather offending, as it seemed to be hard for them to admit that they face difficulties in understanding or dealing with teachers’ comments. While answering the survey, for example, one student remarked, “Of course I understand! Why can I not understand?”

Figure 7. Students’ Response to Statement 19 (N=130)



Statement 3, “I cannot understand my teachers’ comments because they use obscure jargon or abbreviations,” may also help to clarify the previous finding. Indeed, more than half of the students, 52% (68), agreed that they could not understand their teachers’ comments because they used abbreviations or jargon. One student remarked that her teacher uses symbols to indicate the type of error and that confused her, because she could not identify what all those symbols stand for. It is interesting to note that more than a third 35% (45), of the students indicated that they have not received any instructions regarding how to deal with teachers’ feedback, while 65% (85) reported that the teachers gave instructions about feedback. An interviewed student said that her teachers gave some general rules as instructions like: “correct all of the mistakes and revise the paper when necessary,” “write with neat

handwriting,” and “write your essays with a pen.” Another student reported that the teacher did not provide any instructions about how to understand her feedback. Interestingly, she noted that her teacher usually underlines the words and uses symbols like “ST,” “C,” “SP,” “USG,” and “VOC,” and sometimes she draws arrows, small triangles, and brackets, which seems to be meaningless for the student.

Because of the previous problems which some students indicate they face with teachers’ feedback, it is not surprising to know that only 67% (87) felt they like to rewrite their papers after they have been marked, while about a third 33% (43) of them disliked rewriting their papers. Some students seemed to be not motivated to incorporate teachers’ comments and corrections and rewrite their papers. “I do not like writing,” explained one of the students. It is significant to note that out of the 130 students, only 18% (23) acknowledged that they like writing compositions. Other students indicated that they do not rewrite the paper if they have minimal corrections.

When asked what they usually do after they read their teachers’ comments, 36% of the students replied that they discuss them with the teacher. Others indicated that they, “sometimes refer to a dictionary or a grammar book.” Only 42% indicated that they rewrite it and one of them commented, “I would change it the way it should be.” However, about 25% admitted that they do “nothing” about it. It is interesting to note that some students did not consider revising their papers, but rather assumed that the teachers’ feedback was meant to help them in future writing assignments. Many students said they had used the feedback to do better next time.

Overall, results indicated that more than half of the students do not read teachers’ comments in most cases. In addition, more than half reported that they read only some of their compositions after they have been marked. However, as illustrated in Figure 6, students felt that they paid more attention to the feedback than what they reported the teachers provided. Moreover, results showed that the majority of students do not know how to deal with teachers’ feedback on their writing.

### Students’ Preferences and Expectations Regarding Feedback on Writing

What preferences might students have regarding feedback on writing? This question was included to investigate students’ preferences and expectations regarding feedback so as to provide us with some insights on how they perceive the current

writing feedback as well as prompt us on how best we should respond to their compositions. Data was mainly collected from the survey and the interviews. In the survey, there were four close-ended statements to investigate students' preferences (see Table 6). In addition, students' preferences were investigated in more depth in the interviews.

Table 6. Students' Preferences Regarding Feedback on Writing (N=130)

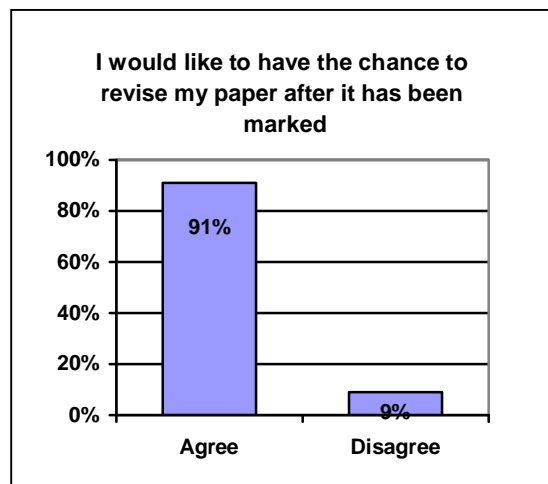
No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
21	A one-word comment is very helpful.	63 (48%)	67 (52%)
23	I would like to have the chance to revise my paper after it has been marked.	118 (91%)	12 (9%)
24	I would like to have feedback from my friends.	95 (73%)	35 (27%)
25	I like the feedback that addresses me personally.	114 (88%)	16 (12%)

Because of the nature of teachers' written comments which seemed to be very brief or even one-word comments in most of students' compositions, I intended to investigate students' opinions about this type of feedback. In response to statement 21, "A one-word comment is very helpful," more than half of the students, 52% (67) indicated that they did not find such comments helpful, while nearly 48% (63) still found it useful to have at least a one-word comment. One of the interviewed students felt that having a one-word comment on her composition "would not explain anything." Others indicated that they could even guess what those comments would be. One student remarked, "It is either good, or very good." Another student expressed her frustration at having only one comment on her paper, which was "Rewrite!" On the other hand, some students believed that having praise comments such as "excellent," "very good," or "nice" is very encouraging and makes them "feel happy." When asked if they prefer to have short or long comments, most of the interviewed students indicated that long comments that contain suggestions or explanation of what was good or bad about the essay are much better than very short comments. However, one student commented, "Brief concise comments which explain or suggest are much better, because I might not comprehend very long

comments.” Another student emphasized, “I like short and clear comments, but if the long comments have suggestions and guidelines I would benefit more.”

Introducing some features of process approach activities seemed to be highly welcomed for these high school students. Indeed, the majority, 91% (118), asserted that they would like to have the chance to revise the paper after it has been marked. I believe that students’ thirst for obtaining high marks will be a very big motive for them to revise their papers. In fact, some students expressed their pleasure at the idea of revising the paper so as to improve their marks. One student remarked smiling, “It would be great, but teachers will not do it!” This remark may reflect the educational context and the grading system which might be obstacles for adopting such activities.

Figure 8. Students’ Response to Statement 23 (N=130)



Students’ response to statement 24, “I would like to have feedback from my friends,” showed that 73% (95) of them expressed interest in having peer review, while 27% (35) indicated that they do not prefer such feedback. In addition, a relatively high percentage, 88% (114), indicated their need for interactive feedback that addresses them personally, and only 12% (16) revealed their dislike for this type of feedback. One student gave this explanation: “If the teacher addresses me personally in her comments, I think I will be more interested to read her comments.” One student suggested, “I like the written comments to address me personally, but of course not the oral ones.” It is noteworthy that oral feedback is often provided in front of the whole class and not privately. This type of feedback seemed to be unfavorable

for some students, as one of them remarked, “I feel embarrassed if the teacher responds to my writing orally in front of my colleagues, especially if I have many errors.”

In fact, students’ interviews revealed more data regarding students’ preferences and expectations. Unlike the survey, the interviews helped me adapt the questions according to the interviewees’ interests and responses. As I found that a big number of students were not given enough written comments compared to oral feedback, which was also given occasionally, I found it a chance to investigate their preferences regarding written and oral feedback. When asked whether they prefer to have oral or written comments, the majority of students indicated that they prefer to have written comments to oral feedback. To be more precise, 14 out of 17 students interviewed indicated their preference for written comments and corrections, while two indicated that they prefer to have written feedback followed with oral discussion. Only one student indicated that oral feedback is much more useful for her. Students who were in favor for having written feedback gave various reasons: First, some students thought that having written comments and corrections would help them revise the paper. Another student explained, “I prefer written comments because I can easily revise my paper according to them. When [the teacher] comments on my essay orally, I usually forget her comments... . She can still find some of the errors that I have missed.” Other student agreed that written comments are easy to remember and “can be kept in the portfolio for future benefit.”

The second reason for preferring written feedback is that “clearly written comments can save both time and face,” as indicated by one of the interviewees. To illustrate, one of the strong students indicated that she would not have the chance to discuss her essay with the teacher every time she got her paper back. She noted, “The teacher is always busy and sometime she is not there to explain my mistakes and discuss the paper with me.” Another student confirmed, “I do not like to be criticized in front of the class.” Students’ responses confirm Fazio’s (2001) notion about the value of written feedback which “has been shown to be especially important for those who are shy in class and those who require encouragement” (p. 236). On the other hand, one student thought that oral comments are better than written comments, because she does not usually pay attention to written comments. She explained, “I do

not like to have a paper full of red ink. It's all underlining, circling, and crossing out." She indicated that oral discussion with the teacher about these errors is much more beneficial.

Finally, data indicates that students believed that concise and informative comments are much more helpful than a one-word comment. They prefer comments that provide suggestions and explanation rather than just praise. Some activities from the process approach were welcomed as they indicated that they like to have more than one draft and peer feedback on their compositions. They also showed a preference for interactive written feedback that addresses them personally.

In the final analysis, data obtained from the survey, the interviews, and the samples of students' papers, revealed that students believe they lack comprehensive informative feedback on their writing. In addition, results indicated that the overriding concern and main focus of correction was aimed at grammatical accuracy, and mechanics. The repeated emphasis on "grammar," "spelling," and "errors" seemed to be a consistent pattern emerging from many data sets reported in this research. It is also important to notice that in the small sample of students' papers considered in this study, no feedback was given on "organization" and only a few general comments were given on "content." However, the majority of students believed in the usefulness of feedback on writing and valued their teachers' feedback. When their views were probed about the helpfulness of teachers' feedback, students acknowledged the usefulness of teachers' feedback in correcting their grammatical and spelling mistakes. On the other hand, a big number of the participants admitted that they do not know how to deal with their teachers' feedback, and more than half reported they found it difficult to interpret and understand their teachers' feedback. A summary of the main findings and implications based on these results will be provided in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary of Findings

This chapter discusses conclusions about the five categories, which are the nature of teachers' feedback as perceived by UAE high school students, students' perceptions of the usefulness and value of feedback on writing, students' perceptions of error corrections, students' reactions and attention to written feedback, and their preferences and expectations regarding feedback on writing. To begin with, an objective summary of the study's findings is provided. Then, limitations of this study are discussed and directions for further research are suggested. Finally, implications for teachers and supervisors based on these results are pointed out.

The main aim of this study was to investigate UAE high school students' perceptions of teachers' feedback on their writing. The first purpose was to investigate students' perceptions about the nature of comments and corrections given on their compositions. Results indicated that students felt that they were given little or no feedback on most aspects of their writing. This conception was highlighted in the data analysis of the survey, interviews, and students' sample papers. Results of the survey suggested that 80% of the participants felt that teachers do not provide enough supportive feedback on their writing. In addition 88% of the interviewed students confirmed this finding and asserted that teachers' feedback often neglects certain aspects of their writing like organization, content, and vocabulary use, and focuses more on grammar and mechanics.

It is significant to note the results of this study conform to a great extent to what has been said in the literature about the nature of teachers' feedback. Indeed, one of the main issues uncovered in the data analysis was students' belief that feedback was too brief, uninformative, vague or general to be to be helpful (Conrad & Goldstien, 1999; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). Moreover, the majority of the students acknowledged that teachers' feedback rarely provides useful suggestions for improvement and, in most cases, it does not even justify a given mark. Although a large majority of students expected that teachers' comment should be motivating, and felt that positive feedback is very important in increasing their confidence, the

evidence from the graded students' papers showed an apparent lack of positive comments. Indeed, a third of the participants indicated that they received only negative comments on their writing, and more than a third indicated that they have thought of giving up writing when they get negative comments. Students also showed positive attitudes toward constructive criticism, and most of them indicated that they were motivated to improve when they received constructive criticism, in spite of the fact that such comments seemed to be rare.

Students seemed to highly value their teachers' responses to their writing, even though the results showed that error corrections and focus on grammar and spelling was the dominant feature of teachers' feedback. This emphasized the idea that learners expectations may be easily influenced by teachers' practices which "may not necessarily be beneficial for the development of writing" (Cohen & Calavanti, 1990, p. 173). However, some students held rather negative attitudes toward writing because of the extensive error correction and the teachers' big concern for language accuracy. Data obtained from interviews suggested that some students even stopped their writing attempts and tended to memorize ready-made essays in order to please their teachers and achieve accuracy. In addition, some students even perceived writing activities and responding to teachers comments' as an activity mainly meant to practice and improve grammar and spelling. Nevertheless, a high percentage, 94% of students, confirmed that they feel that they learn most when their teachers highlight their grammatical mistakes.

As for students' perceptions about the value of teachers' feedback, results reinforce the overall reported value in Gunn and Raven (2005) and Cohen and Cavalacnti (1990), and conform to Weaver's (2006) findings that "students wholeheartedly recognize the value of feedback in improving their learning, but their comments imply that feedback is not as effective as it could be" (p. 390). Students' remarks implied that their teachers' feedback lacks positive comments that highlight their strengths, constructive criticism that diagnoses their weaknesses, and helpful suggestions for improvement. In addition, many students seemed to be dissatisfied and feel short-changed, as the feedback they received was insufficient and incomprehensive. Based on the type of feedback they mostly get, students



acknowledged the usefulness of teachers' feedback in making them aware of their grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Students' attention and reaction to their teachers' feedback was also investigated in order to answer the research question, "What do students do with teachers' feedback?" One of the important findings was that more than half of the students, 55%, admitted that they do not read their teachers' comments in most cases. Interview data revealed that students pay more attention to corrections and comments given on writing assignments suggested in their workbooks. They indicated that they revise these compositions and keep them in their portfolios or workbooks in order to refer to them before exams. However, the majority of them (69%) reported that they do not know how to deal with their teachers' feedback, and more than half admitted that they face difficulty in interpreting and understanding their teachers' comments and corrections.

Finally, students' preferences and expectations were also investigated in order to provide an answer for the last question, "What preferences might UAE high school students have regarding feedback on writing?" First, in line with Conrad and Goldstien's (1999) findings, most students in this study showed a preference for longer comments that address or explain specific problems and give specific suggestions. The students indicated that detailed informative comments that provide explanations or suggestions are much helpful than "one word comment," "cryptic questions," or "imperatives" (p. 26) in the margins, which they often get as a response to their writing. In addition, the majority showed a preference for effective written feedback that could reinforce and develop a "student-centered approach" in writing compositions (Weaver, 2006, p. 392). Moreover, adopting some process writing activities seemed to be welcomed, as the overwhelming majority, 91% (118), asserted that they would like to have the chance to revise their papers after they have been marked. They also showed a strong interest in peer review and interactive feedback that addresses them personally.

#### Limitations of This Study and Directions for Further Research

Although the purpose of this study was to investigate UAE high school students' perceptions of teachers' feedback on their writing, one of the limitations of

this study is that it may not represent all of UAE high school students. The number of students involved was 130; however, they were from only three schools in Fujairah. The findings cannot be generalized to all high schools in the UAE. However, given that government schools in the UAE have a standardized curriculum, perceptions of high school students in these schools might provide us with a good insight on how ESL students' within the context of UAE public high schools perceive and handle the written feedback on their compositions. Similar studies on a larger scale with different participants from different schools in the UAE are needed in order to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the beliefs and practices in the teaching and learning of writing in this educational context.

Another limitation to this study that should be considered is the survey. First, adopting some questions from Ferris (1995) helped me ensure the validity of survey items because they had been previously used in several educational contexts. However, using Ferris's questions along with the close-ended statements created a comprehensive but rather a lengthy survey which was not easy to administer, especially for high school students. Administrating the survey during regular class time helped me overcome this problem and provided enough time for the students to handle the questions. However, the survey could be developed and modified to serve future studies. For example, adding some more close-ended statements and rewording others as well as taking out certain questions would make it more suitable for the UAE high school context.

In addition, one of the problems that emerged in this study was UAE high school students' misconception of feedback on writing. Because of the nature of the feedback they received, which primarily focused on grammar and mechanics, students appeared to have a limited notion of feedback. In other words, students were not experienced with comprehensive feedback that involves other features of writing other than grammatical features. The overemphasis on errors and grammar reinforces the understanding that these surface concerns must be prioritized while writing. Students seemed to be unaware of other features of feedback and therefore might not have been able to judge the usefulness of the feedback they get from their teachers fairly.

Finally, as the main purpose of this study was to present a comprehensive view of UAE high school students' perceptions of teachers feedback, further studies are needed to look at this issue from the teachers' perspective. In other words, it is important to investigate teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the impact of feedback on writing. Further research is also needed to investigate teachers' feedback on students' written work within the overall context of language teaching, including the classroom setting, writing instructions and assessments, and the curriculum objectives. Investigating broader classroom practices and how students approach the writing curriculum are very important aspects in understanding the teaching and learning of writing skills. In addition, interviewing teachers and surveying their beliefs and attitudes regarding the impact of written feedback on students' performance may bring about interesting and valuable insights on how teachers' approach the process of teaching writing skills.

### Implications of the Study

#### Implications for Teachers

It is necessary for teachers to consider the perceptions of the students on feedback in order to understand students' writing problems and needs in the learning of writing. Therefore, I believe that the current study provides implications for teachers. The first and the most important implication is the need for teachers to reflect on their teaching of writing practices and the nature of comments and corrections they give for students on their compositions. Highlighting students' needs, problems, and expectations regarding the feedback they receive on their writing may create or develop teachers' awareness of the role their feedback could play in the process of teaching and learning writing skills. These problems and concerns may highlight an important point about response to students' writing.

It appeared that the modes of error correction and the feedback provided were not very effective, as they did not provide adequate information to the students about their particular strengths and weaknesses in writing. In addition, students were not aware of some features of their writing such as the organization and development of ideas. Therefore, students may not be guided toward the development of their writing skills. Based on this finding, teachers may need to diversify their feedback on

students' writing. I believe that teachers' feedback should help students recognize both grammatical and lexical errors as well as problems with content, organization, development of ideas, and clarity of writing. Teachers need to provide specific written feedback on students' writing that identifies student errors, guides the student toward a better attempt next time, and provides some positive comment on compositions that were well done. Teachers also should have clear strategies and objectives regarding their feedback on writing and should communicate them to their students effectively.

To make their feedback more effective, the teachers might want to consider the possibilities of making some adjustments in their usual feedback practices, in the following six ways. First, they could vary the focus and style of their comments to draw students' attention to different features in their compositions. Teachers should not deprive some students of certain features of writing by focusing mainly on grammar and mechanic issues. For instance, teachers may show interest in students' ideas by providing specific content comments and responding to their compositions as both an interested reader as well as a language advisor.

Second, from the beginning of the school year, teachers should explain and discuss their philosophy of response and provide clear and guided instructions for students to understand and deal with this response. For example, if correction symbols, abbreviations, or certain methods of error corrections will be used, they should be described and illustrated for the students. Teachers may provide a checklist or handout of those correction symbols. Third, teachers should maintain a good balance between praise and criticism and provide constructive comments on certain problems on students' compositions. For instance, they should provide helpful suggestions for students on how to improve their compositions and solve these problems. In addition, teachers may need to vary their positive comments and relate them to students' efforts and the positive aspects of their essays. In other words, they could address students' progress and relate students' compositions to other writings they have done in the course. I believe that teachers need to direct their efforts toward providing guidance and motivation to students' writing attempts rather than simply highlighting their weaknesses and justifying the marks.

Fourth, teachers should encourage students to attend to the feedback given on their compositions and revise accordingly. First of all, teachers' comments should

stimulate revision and provide clear and helpful suggestions and guidance. Also, teachers may need to train students on how to deal with their comments and corrections by having a follow up oral sessions to discuss annotated or marked papers. In addition, when returning marked students' papers, teachers may allocate time in class for students to read and think about their teachers' feedback on their compositions so that it becomes more convenient and less embarrassing for the students to approach their teachers for help. Teachers may encourage revision also through grades or publication of students' revised essays.

Fifth, in their expectations, students showed a great preference for interactive feedback that addresses them personally. In addition, they seemed to be receptive of some features of the writing process approach such as peer review. Teachers may take these expectations into consideration and respond personally where possible. They should tailor responses to individual writers and write comments that could maintain an interactive dialogue between the teacher and the student. Moreover, they should encourage peer review as an additional form of feedback that could be given to students on their texts.

Sixth, teachers should encourage students to analyze and reflect on the feedback given on their compositions. They may involve students critically with the feedback they get by encouraging them to keep records or summaries of how they may improve future compositions. In this paper, students may summarize and make notes of the main problems pointed out or the suggestions given. Also, they may write general rules extracted from the corrections and specific text comments. During writing compositions, teachers may encourage students to refer to their notes and make use of their recommendations. As many students in the study seemed to be very concerned with teachers' feedback for the sake of preparing for exams, this technique may help students make use of their teachers' corrections and comments beyond the composition at hand.

#### Implications for Supervisors

The UAE Ministry of Education's system of supervision is designed to both monitor and improve teachers' performance. Therefore, supervisors could play a significant technical and informative role in teachers' professional development.

Based on the results of this study, the nature of teachers' feedback did not seem to be as informative as it could be. Besides, the majority of students felt short-changed, as they feel that teachers do not provide enough supportive feedback on their writing. One possible reason for this is that teachers may simply feel overwhelmed and have no time to provide thoughtful feedback to a big number of students in their classes. Another reason is that many teachers may lack the knowledge and the skills of responding effectively to students' writing. Sommers (1982) discussed this issue and notes that responding to students' writing is "rarely stressed in teachers' training and writing workshops" (p. 145). Teachers may have been trained in prewriting techniques and developing writing assignments, but rarely in the process of reading students' compositions and providing effective and meaningful comments. The third possible reason is that "there will always be those who remain cynical about the entire process of student learning in general and the purpose of feedback in particular" (Weaver, 2006, p. 392). So, what might be the role of supervisors here?

Supervisors could play an active role in raising teachers' awareness to the role of teachers' feedback in the process of teaching and learning writing. They need to highlight the importance of teachers' feedback on students' writing development and its impact on students' motivation and attitudes towards writing. Also, they need to raise teachers' awareness of the roles their responses could play on the way students perceive and approach writing in English. Seminars and workshops on both the theoretical knowledge and the pedagogical implications on how to provide effective feedback are definitely needed to elevate and update both teachers' knowledge and teachers' skills in this particular area of teaching writing. In addition, supervisors can hold workshops and practical training sessions to guide and train teachers on how to deal and react to different writing by students from different levels. These workshops will be more effective if real samples of students' writing are acted upon.

### Final Thought

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the importance of teachers' feedback on students' compositions. It presents some insight into students' perceptions regarding the nature of feedback given on their writing. There could be some truth in the claim that students do not care about feedback, but in the light of the findings of

this study, this could be due to the nature of the feedback which does not guide or motivate students, or to the fact that most students do not know how to handle or interpret this feedback. I believe that one of the important contributions of the results of this study is to offer the encouraging insight to UAE teachers and writing practitioners that students do value and appreciate teachers' feedback on their writing. However, they have expectations that are not being met. Hopefully, this could be a trigger for teachers to reflect critically on their teaching of writing and responding practices.

Without changing teachers' beliefs and their actual practices regarding writing, it is unlikely that students will change their expectations and perceptions of this skill. Being focused mainly on grammar and mechanics, students' main concern will always revolve around those features when writing and attending to teachers' feedback. Finally, when effective and interactive feedback is provided, teachers will be able to observe the effects of their feedback on students' development as writers, students' attitudes, and students' motivation for writing and language learning in general.

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Appendix A: The English Copy of the Survey

**UAE High School Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Feedback on their Writing.**

Grade:..... School Name: .....

Section: Art  Science

Do you like writing? Yes  No  Somewhat

Have you ever received instructions on how to understand and use feedback?

Yes  No

**1) Please read the questions and tick (√) the appropriate answer**

1. How much of each composition do you read over again when your teacher returns it to you?

All \_\_\_\_\_ Most \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many of your teacher's comments and corrections do you think about carefully?

All \_\_\_\_\_ Most \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many of the comments and the corrections involve:

	A lot	Some	A little	None
Organization	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content/ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grammar	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocabulary	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mechanics (e.g., punctuation, spelling)	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. If you pay attention to what your teacher wrote, how much attention do you pay to the comments and corrections involving:

	A lot	Some	A little	None
Organization	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content/ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grammar	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocabulary	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mechanics (e.g., punctuation, spelling)	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. My teacher usually

- A- Underlines my errors
- B- Highlights the type of errors I make
- C- Writes the correct answer to me.
- D- Others (please list) .....

Appendix A2: The Open-ended Questions

**2) Please answer the following questions and explain your responses briefly on the lines below**

1. What do you usually do after you read your teacher's comments and corrections (i.e. do you look up corrections in a grammar book? see the teacher? rewrite your paper? or do nothing?)

.....  
.....

2. Are there any comments or corrections that you don't understand? If so, can you give examples?

.....  
.....

3. What do you do when you don't understand your teacher's comments and corrections?

.....  
.....

4. Do you feel that your teacher's response on your writing helps you improve your writing composition skills? Why or why not?

.....  
.....

5. Are any of your teacher's comments positive? If so, write an example.

.....  
.....

6. Are any of your teacher's comments negative? If so, write an example.

.....  
.....

7. How would you rate your skills in writing compositions?

Excellent\_\_\_\_\_ Very Good\_\_\_\_\_ Good\_\_\_\_\_ Not so good \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix A3: The Close-ended Statements

**3) Read each statement carefully and tick ( ✓ ) only one appropriate box.**

SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; D= Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree

No.	Statement	SD	A	D	ST
1.	I like to rewrite my paper after it has been marked.				
2.	I respond well when the teachers demonstrate in their comments that they have made a real effort to understand my point.				
3.	I cannot understand my teacher's comments because they use obscure jargon or abbreviations.				
4.	The feedback I receive is clearly written and easy to read				
5.	Teachers make only negative comments on my paper.				
6.	Feedback on writing is very useful and helpful.				
7.	My teacher's feedback on my writing encourages me to write more				
8.	I like my teacher to correct my grammatical mistakes.				
9.	Teachers do not give enough feedback on my writing.				
10.	My teacher's comments should be very motivating				
11.	Teachers' feedback rarely provides me with useful suggestions for improvement.				
12.	Constructive criticism is needed to know how to improve.				
13.	Feedback on my writing encourages me to improve.				
14.	Feedback is too uninformative or brief to be helpful.				
15.	I have thought of giving up writing when I get negative feedback.				
16.	Feedback on my writing helps me reflect on what I have learned.				
17.	Teachers' comments are only underlining and crossing out.				
18.	I do not read teacher's comments in most cases.				
19.	I do not know how to deal with my teacher's comments.				



20.	Teachers rarely give useful comments.				
21.	A one-word comment is very helpful.				
22.	I learn most when my teacher highlights my grammatical mistakes.				
23.	I would like to have the chance to revise my paper after it has been marked.				
24.	I would like to have feedback from my friends.				
25.	I like the feedback that addresses me personally.				
26.	I learn better when my teacher writes the correct answer for me.				
27.	Helpful comments should provide suggestions, examples, and guidelines.				
28.	I prefer that my teacher points out my mistakes and I correct it by myself.				
29.	I think that the comments written at the end of the paper are very helpful.				
30.	Teachers do not show interest in my ideas, as they correct mostly grammar.				

Would you like to be interviewed on this topic? In the interview, we will discuss some of your answers so that you will have a chance to explain your opinions in more depth:

- Yes, I would like to be interviewed.
- No, I would prefer not to be interviewed.

If yes, please provide your name and contact information so I can contact you:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I appreciate your time in filling out this survey. Thank you very much!

## Appendix B: The Arabic Copy of the Survey

هذا الاستبيان جزء من بحث بعنوان تقييم طلبة الثانويه لتقييم المعلمين لكتاباتهم

- الصف: ..... المدرسة: .....

- القسم:  الأدبي  العلمي

- هل تحبب كتابة النصوص الانجليزية؟  نعم  لا  الى حد ما
- هل سبق أن تلقيت أي تعليمات أو ارشادات حوله كيفية الاستفادة أو استخدام تصحيحات المعلمة على كتاباتك؟  نعم  لا

### 1) Please read the questions and tick (√) the appropriate answer

1. ما هي نسبة ما تعيدن قراءته بدقة من المواضيع الانشائية التي تكتبيها بعد أن تعيدها لك المعلمة؟  
كلها (All)  بعضها (Some)  أغلبها (Most)  لا شيء (None)

2. هل تفكرين بامعان بالملاحظات والتصويبات التي تدونها معلمتك على كتاباتك؟  
كل الملاحظات (all)  بعض الملاحظات (some)  أغلب الملاحظات (most)  لا

3. ما هي كمية التصحيحات والملاحظات التي تشمل على:

	A lot (الكثير)	Some (بعضها)	A little (قليل)	None (لا يوجد)
Organization التنظيم	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content/ideas الأفكار والمحتوى	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grammar القواعد	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocabulary المفردات	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mechanics الاملاء وعلامات الترقيم (e.g., punctuation, spelling)	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. اذا اعرت اهتماما لما تكتبه معلمتك، ما مدى اهتمامك بالملاحظات والتصحيحات التي تشمل:

	A lot (الكثير)	Some (بعضها)	A little (قليل)	None (لا يوجد)
Organization التنظيم	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content/ideas الأفكار والمحتوى	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grammar القواعد	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocabulary المفردات	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mechanics الاملاء وعلامات الترقيم (e.g., punctuation, spelling)	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. My teacher usually
- A- Underlines my errors (يضع خطا تحت اخطائي)  
B- Highlights the type of errors I make (يبين لي نوع الخطأ الذي أرتكبته)  
C- Writes the correct answer to me. (يكتب لي الاجابة الصحيحة)  
D- Others (please list) (اخرى، اذكرها)

.....

2) Please answer the following questions and explain your responses briefly on the lines below

1. What do you usually do after you read your teacher's comments and corrections (i.e. do you look up corrections in a grammar book? see the teacher? rewrite your paper? or do nothing?)  
ماذا تفعلين عادة بعد قراءة ملاحظات وتصحيحات معلمتك على ورقتك؟ (مثلا، هل ترجعين الى كتاب في القواعد، تسألين المعلم، تعيدين كتابة الورقة، أو لا تفعلين شيئا؟)

.....  
.....

2. Are there any comments or corrections that you don't understand? If so, can you give examples?  
هل هناك بعض التصحيحات والملاحظات التي لا تفهميها؟ اذا كان كذلك هل لك أن تذكري أمثلة على ذلك؟

.....  
.....

3. What do you do when you don't understand your teacher's comments and corrections?  
ماذا تفعلين عندما لا تستطيعين فهم ملاحظات وتصحيحات المعلمة على ورقتك؟

.....  
.....

4. Do you feel that your teacher's response on your writing helps you improve your writing composition skills? Why or why not?  
هل تشعرين أن ردود معلمتك على كتاباتك تساعدك على تحسين مهارات الكتابة؟ لماذا؟

.....  
.....

5. Are any of your teacher's comments positive? If so, write an example.  
هل تكتب المعلمة لك ملاحظات ايجابية؟ اذا كان كذلك، اذكرى مثلا.

.....  
.....

6. Are any of your teacher's comments negative? If so, write an example.  
هل من تعليقات وملاحظات معلمتك ما هو سلبي؟ اذا كان كذلك، اذكر مثلا.

.....  
.....

7. How would you rate your skills in writing compositions?  
ما هو تقييمك لمهاراتك في كتابة النصوص الإنجليزية؟

Excellent ممتاز \_\_\_\_\_ Very Good جيد جدا \_\_\_\_\_ Good جيد \_\_\_\_\_ Not so good ليست جيدة \_\_\_\_\_

3) Read each statement carefully and tick ( ✓ ) only one appropriate box.

أرجو قراءة العبارات التالية بتمعن ثم وضع علامة في الخانة المناسبة

No.	Statement	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1.	I like to rewrite my paper after it has been marked. أحب ان أعيد كتابة الورقة بعد تصحيحها				
2.	I respond well when the teachers demonstrate in their comments that they have made a real effort to understand my point. أتجاوب مع التصحيحات بشكل افضل عندما أستنتج من خلال ملاحظات المعلم انه بذل جهدا لفهم وجهة نظري				
3.	I can't understand my teacher's comments because they use obscure jargon or abbreviations. لا استطيع فهم ملاحظات معلمي لانه يستخدم مصطلحات و اختصارات غير مفهومه				
4.	The feedback I receive is clearly written and easy to read. الملاحظات والتصحيحات التي اتلقاها مكتوبة بوضوح وسهلة القراءة				
5.	Teachers make only negative comments on my paper. يدون المعلمون ملاحظات سلبية فقط على ورقتي				
6.	My teacher's feedback is very useful and helpful. تعليقات وملاحظات معلمي مفيدة وتساعدني كثيرا				
7.	My teacher's feedback on my writing encourages me to write more تشجعني ملاحظات معلمي على كتاباتي على كتابة المزيد				
8.	I like my teacher to correct my grammatical mistakes. أحب ان يصحح المعلم أخطائي في القواعد النحوية				
9.	Teachers don't give enough feedback on my writing. لا يعطي المعلمون ملاحظات وتعليقات كافية على ما أكتبه				
10.	Teachers' comments should be very motivating. ملاحظات المعلم يجب أن تكون محفزة جدا				
11.	Feedback rarely provides me with useful suggestions for improvement. نادرا ما تزودني التغذية الراجعة باقتراحات مفيدة تساعدني على تطوير مهاراتي الكتابية				
12.	Constructive criticism is needed to know how to improve. النقد البناء مطلوب حتى أعرف كيف أنمي مهاراتي الكتابية				
13.	Feedback on my writing encourages me to improve. تشجعني التغذية الراجعة على تطوير مهاراتي				
14.	Feedback is too uninformative or brief to be helpful. الملاحظات لا تعطي معلومات كافية و مختصرة جدا على أن تكون مفيدة				
15.	I have thought of giving up writing when I get negative feedback. التعليقات السلبية على ورقتي تدفعني للإستسلام				
16.	Feedback helps me reflect on what I have learned. ملاحظات المعلم وتصحيحاته تساعدني على أن أسترجع ما درسته				
17.	Teachers' comments are only underlining and crossing out. تصحیح المعلمين للنصوص التي أكتبها مجرد خطوط و حذف				

No.	Statement	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
18.	I don't read teacher's comments in most cases. وملاحظات المعلمة على كتاباتي نادرا ما اقرا تعليقات				
19.	I don't know how to deal with my teacher's comments. أجهل كيفية التعامل مع ملاحظات المعلم (أي لا أعرف كيف أصححها)				
20.	Teachers rarely give useful comments. نادرا ما يعطي المعلم تعليقات مفيدة				
21.	A one word comment is very helpful. التعليق الذي يتضمن "كلمة واحدة" فقط مفيد ويساعد كثيرا				
22.	I learn most when my teacher highlights my grammatical mistakes. المعلم أخطائي النحوية أتعلم أكثر عندما يبين لي				
23.	I would like to have the chance to revise my paper after it has been marked. أحب أن أحصل على فرصة تمكنني من مراجعة الورقة بعد أن يتم تصحيحها				
24.	I would like to have feedback from my peers before I submit it. أحب أن أحصل على تصحيحات وملاحظات من زملائي على ورقتي قبل ان أسلمها للمعلم				
25.	I like feedback that addresses me personally أحب التغذية الراجعة التي تخاطبني بشكل شخصي				
26.	I learn better when my teacher writes the correct answer for me. أتعلم بشكل أفضل عندما يكتب لي المعلم بنفسه الإجابات الصحيحة على ورقتي				
27.	Helpful comments should provide suggestions, examples, and guidelines. الملاحظات المفيدة يجب أن تشمل على اقتراحات، أمثلة وارشادات				
28.	I prefer that my teacher points out my mistake and I correct it by myself. أفضل أن تشير معلمتي الى الخطأ الذي أرتكبته وأن أقوم أنا بتصحيحه بنفسي				
29.	I think that the comments that are written at the end of the paper are very useful. أعتقد أن الملاحظات التي يتم كتابتها في نهاية الورقة ستفيدني أكثر				
30.	Teachers don't show interest in my ideas, as they correct mostly grammar. لا يبدي المعلمين الاهتمام بالأفكار بل يركزون على القواعد فقط في التصحيح				

هل من الممكن إجراء مقابلة معك بخصوص هذا الموضوع؟ علما ان المقابلة لن تستغرق أكثر من عشر دقائق وستكون لديك الفرصة للتعبير عن رأيك بشكل أفضل.  
إذا كنت موافقا أرجو أن تزودنا بالمعلومات التي يمكن من خلالها الإتصال بك  
الإسم: .....  
رقم الهاتف: .....

شكرا جزيلاً على تعاونكم

## Appendix C: Survey Statistical Results

### 1. Students answers to section 1 in the survey (N=130).

Question	Answers	Frequency	Percent
Do you like writing compositions?	No	40	31
	Somewhat	67	52
	Yes	23	18
	Total	130	100
Have you ever received instructions on how to understand and use feedback?	No	45	35
	Yes	85	65
	Total	130	100

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percent
1. How much of each composition do you read over again when your teacher returns it to you?	All	21	16
	Most	21	16
	Some	66	51
	None	22	17
	Total	130	100
2. How many of your teacher's comments and corrections do you think about carefully?	All	31	24
	Most	30	23
	Some	46	35
	None	23	18
	Total	130	100

		A lot	Some	A little	None
3. How many of the comments and the corrections involve:	Organization	18 (14%)	39 (30%)	47 (36%)	26 (20%)
	Content/ ideas	16 (12%)	45 (35%)	42 (32%)	27 (21%)
	Grammar	58 (45%)	30 (23%)	31 (24%)	11 (8%)
	Vocabulary	27 (21%)	38 (29%)	45 (35%)	20 (15%)
	Mechanics	33 (25%)	34 (26%)	38 (29%)	25 (19%)

		A lot	Some	A little	None
4. How much attention do you pay to the comments and corrections involving:	Organization	47 (36%)	43 (33%)	27 (21%)	13 (10%)
	Content/ ideas	40 (31%)	54 (42%)	26 (20%)	10 (8%)
	Grammar	88 (68%)	23 (18%)	12 (9%)	7 (5%)
	Vocabulary	45 (35%)	45 (35%)	29 (22%)	11 (9%)
	Mechanics	41 (32%)	32 (25%)	40 (31%)	17 (13%)

Summary of students' response to question 5:

5. My teacher usually:

- A: Underlines my error
- B: Highlight the type of errors.
- C: Writes the correct answers for me.
- D. Others

Type of error correction	Frequency	Percent
A: Underlining the errors	65	50%
B: Highlighting the type of errors.	29	22%
C: Writing the correct answers.	57	44%
D. Others	2	2%

2. Students answers to question 7 in section 2 in the Survey (N=130).

Question	Rate	Frequency	Percent
7. How would you rate your skills in writing compositions?	Not so good	49	38
	Good	51	39
	Very Good	25	19
	Excellent	5	4
	Total	130	100.0

3: Students answers to the close-ended statements (N=130).

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	I like to rewrite my paper after it has been marked.	20 (15%)	67 (52%)	25 (19%)	18 (14%)
2	I respond well when the teachers demonstrate in their comments that they have made a real effort to understand my point.	49 (38%)	65 (50%)	14 (11%)	2 (2%)
3	I cannot understand my teacher's comments because they use obscure jargon or abbreviations.	27 (21%)	41 (32%)	45 (35%)	17 (13%)
4	The feedback I receive is clearly written and easy to read	28 (22%)	62 (48%)	30 (23%)	10 (8%)
5	Teachers make only negative comments on my paper.	13 (10%)	26 (20%)	48 (37%)	43 (33%)
6	Feedback on writing is very useful and helpful.	52 (40%)	60 (46%)	12 (9%)	6 (5%)
7	My teacher's feedback on my writing encourages me to write more	45 (35%)	58 (45%)	18 (14%)	9 (7%)
8	I like my teacher to correct my grammatical mistakes.	77 (59%)	40 (31%)	9 (7%)	4 (3%)
9	Teachers do not give enough feedback on my writing.	44 (34%)	60 (46%)	21 (16%)	5 (4%)
10	My teacher's comments should be very motivating.	89 (69%)	36 (28%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)
11	Teachers' feedback rarely provides me with useful suggestions for improvement.	26 (20%)	71 (55%)	22 (17%)	11 (9%)
12	Constructive criticism is needed to know how to improve.	47 (36%)	56 (43%)	17 (13%)	10 (8%)
13	Feedback encourages me to improve.	55 (42%)	62 (48%)	10 (8%)	3 (2%)
14	Feedback is too uninformative or brief to be helpful.	18 (14%)	36 (28%)	56 (43%)	20 (15%)
15	I have thought of giving up writing when I get negative feedback.	28 (22%)	22 (17%)	40 (31%)	40 (31%)
16	Feedback helps me reflect on what I have learned.	41 (32%)	74 (57%)	10 (8%)	5 (4%)
17	Teachers' comments are only underlining and crossing out.	27 (21%)	30 (23%)	42 (32%)	31 (24%)
18	I do not read teacher's comments in most cases.	19 (15%)	52 (40%)	47 (36%)	12 (9%)
19	I do not know how to deal with my teacher's comments.	30 (23%)	57 (44%)	34 (26%)	9 (7%)



20	Teachers rarely give useful comments.	30 (23%)	48 (37%)	38 (29%)	14 (11%)
21	A one-word comment is very helpful.	20 (15%)	43 (33%)	43 (33%)	24 (19%)
22	I learn most when my teacher highlights my grammatical mistakes.	67 (52%)	55 (42%)	7 (5%)	1 (1%)
23	I would like to have the chance to revise my paper after it has been marked.	68 (52%)	50 (39%)	9 (7%)	3 (2%)
24	I would like to have feedback from my friends.	49 (38%)	46 (35%)	27 (21%)	8 (6%)
25	I like the feedback that addresses me personally.	71 (55%)	43 (33%)	12 (9%)	4 (3%)
26	I learn better when my teacher writes the correct answer for me.	56 (43%)	51 (39%)	19 (15%)	4 (3%)
27	Helpful comments should provide suggestions, examples, and guidelines.	67 (52%)	56 (43%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)
28	I prefer that my teacher points out my mistakes and I correct it by myself.	56 (43%)	43 (33%)	18 (14%)	13 (10%)
39	I think that the comments written at the end of the paper are very helpful.	61 (47 %)	63 (49%)	4 (3%)	2 (2%)
30	Teachers do not show interest in my ideas, as they correct mostly grammar.	40 (31%)	29 (22%)	40 (31%)	21 (16%)

Appendix D: Samples of Students' Papers

Sample 1

1. Write a story about something that was difficult for you to learn, when you were younger.

When I was younger I was not keen on cooking. I was always afraid of starting fire or making easy things. My sister, who <sup>had</sup> finished her university <sup>studies</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>taught</sup> me <sup>how to make many dishes</sup> (many cookies) and help me to do difficult (food) ones too. She <sup>taught</sup> me <sup>these</sup> in summer holidays. In fact, I was not willing to <sup>(start)</sup> but when I heard my mother <sup>praised</sup> and my friends <sup>were</sup> (encouraging), I <sup>me</sup> (encourage) <sup>tried</sup> and I became great cooker.

Yes

Good ideas nice start!

Sample 2

(4) The Tundra and Takla Makan are the same desert (it) is cold winter desert. The Empty Quarter is difference from the two because Empty Quarter is very hot, dry and lots of sandunes. White Tundra and Takla Makan ~~do~~ <sup>don't</sup> have sandunes. ~~all~~ ~~let~~ them are very little rain and lack air water.

Rewrite again carefully

### Letter Writing

Write a letter to a pen friend telling her about an imaginary trip with your family to the Empty Quarter. Your name is Noor Ali and Your address is P.O.Box 6985, Abu Dhabi.

~~P.O. Box 6985~~

~~Abu Dhabi~~

~~U.A.E~~

~~411012006~~

Dear ~~Fatima~~

I'm very happy <sup>sp</sup> to write this letter for you. I'm to go in the Empty Quarter. <sup>sp</sup> The Empty Quarter is very hot and live in the be ~~be~~ bad <sup>sp</sup> and he is a sand dunes and ~~flower~~ see of the flower <sup>sp</sup> and look of some waters and in the ~~sun~~ <sup>sp</sup> ~~sun~~ in the ~~#~~ <sup>sp</sup> ~~tour~~ in very hot and ~~hot~~ <sup>sp</sup> in the ~~tour~~ <sup>sp</sup> in very ~~could~~ <sup>sp</sup> in ~~45°~~.  
Please write to my ~~sup~~ <sup>sp</sup> soon

~~Basel~~

~~Noor Ali~~

$$\begin{array}{r} 7\frac{1}{2} \\ 10 \end{array}$$

Sample 4

Write about how to be a good learner?

I am to be ~~learned~~ signed learn it can & expect a time.  
I go am come to school in time. I am reading book every time.  
I am needy friend. I am writing homework. I am help listening  
from teacher. I am need net and computer need for me.  
I am orgins for time. I am help to my friend. I am help from  
my brother and sister. I am watching TV. I am need from my self.  
I advise my friend. I am writing stories. I help me imagination it  
help from my self.

3/10

Sample 5

Writing

Write about your best toy:

Play station is my best toys. My father give it  
to me in my birth day and I feel very happy. I keep it in my room.  
When I feel boring, I go to play station. It's very useful  
machine and it's not harmful. It's may be some harmful if I play it too  
much and in all my time. And it may be destray my eyes. A play  
station it's like small square and you can put on it many disc  
player to play many thing. When I play play station, my brother play  
with me. The colour of the playstation is black. you can change  
the play station from play station one to two. Play station two is  
more interesting. Finally, I really like it because it is very good toys.

8/10

## Sample 6

some people spend alot of there time in <sup>Print</sup> works. They didnot have any time to there families. <sup>C</sup> they are busy all the the time. on the other hand we should <sup>use</sup> had the weekend the to take overf for our <sup>use</sup> psychological and soul. ~~because we are~~ The weekend s ~~we~~ organize our time by balance between work and family, ~~the weeks~~ ~~make~~

## Sample 7

### \* learning style \*

I am ~~preferable~~ <sup>an.</sup> ~~methods~~ individual learner. I like to study alone but I don't like learning in group. I ~~enjoy~~ like to do grammer excercises alone, when we work in groups we learn other students mistakes. I like <sup>think reading</sup> read English is easier than listening. I don't like to learn all the rules. I like to save vocabularis alone. Finally I believed ~~that~~ methods learn individual <sup>are</sup> very concentration save and information useful. <sup>learning methods</sup>

V. G

## Sample 8

There are two kinds of deserts in the world hot and cold. It has the same common features. It has little life and ~~water~~ water.

The hot desert the temperature is very hot like Empty Quarter in gulf. The temperature goes as high as  $54^{\circ}$  in summer. ~~Beduin~~ The Beduin people who live in deserts. They ~~travel~~ would travel to see coast because the weather ~~is~~ was more comfortable there. The Empty Quarter is have a strong wind and there is very little rain.

The cold deserts the temperature is ~~very~~ freezing like Canadian Tundra. The ~~them~~ temperature ~~there~~ in summer is ~~between~~ between  $0-10$  degrees. People who live in tundra we called ~~it~~. They also travel to find a nice weather ~~that~~.

Take care of  
the structure

## Sample 9

There is two kinds of desert hot and cold desert. The common features of deserts are the lack of water and little lives or grows. The most famous one is the Empty Quarter.

The Empty Quarter is in the Gulf exactly in Saudi Arabia. This desert is very hot, dry and has lots of sand dunes. The Bedouin live in the Empty Quarter. They call it Al-Ramlah and they travelled to sea coast in summer because the weather was more comfortable there. The temperatures in summer is as high as  $54^{\circ}$  and in winter goes down to freezing and sometimes raining.

After raining to desert looks like a garden with grass and flowers but this is just temporary.

There are many more kinds of animals in the Empty Quarter some disappeared like lions, ostriches and zebras others rare animals like gazelles and Arabian oryx, common animals like camels, birds and butterfly. Some animals that live in the Empty Quarter are active at night, they can hunt in the dark. People have always lived in the Empty Quarter, but they didn't have permanent towns and cities. They were nomads who moved from place to place. They lived in tents that they could easily take with them.

Thank you

## Sample 10

SUBJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't copy Rewrite by your own.  
We now flying at deserts sky world. for acquaintance.

on types her and from her empty quarter, tundra, takla  
Makan. And now start flying.

welcome to the Rub al Khali, or empty quarter, a world  
of harsh extremes. <sup>misuse</sup> the may rank as both the least,  
and most, hospitable place on earth. For thousands of  
years this territory has resisted settlement as one of  
the earth's hottest, driest and most unyielding environments.

Yet it's also home to a culture on the edge, a proud  
Bedouin society working to adapt its mix of Islam,  
ancient tribal customs and new found oil riches to  
a demanding and fast-paced modern world.

Geologically, the empty quarter is one of the most oil-rich  
places in the world. vast oil reserves have been discovered  
underneath the sand stacks. sheyba, in the middle of the  
desert, is a major Arab light crude oil-producing site in Saudi  
Arabia. Also, Ghawwar field, the largest oil field in the world,  
extends southward in to the northern most parts of the empty  
quarter.

And now start flying to tundra sky.

The tundra is a cold, treeless area; it is the ~~the~~ coldest  
biome. The tundra is characterized very low ~~temperatures~~  
temperatures, very little precipitation (rain or snow), a short  
growing season, few nutrients, and low biological diversity.

The word tundra comes from the Finnish word (tunturi),



## VITA

Fatmah Al Hammoudi is a high school teacher in UAE government schools. She has been teaching for six years. She obtained her bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from UAE University in Al Ain in 2000. Then she obtained the Diploma in Teaching from the same University in 2001. She is a member of the Teachers' Association, iEARN (International Education and Resource Network), and TESOL Arabia. She designed software programs for English language teaching for young learners like *Parade's Partner* and *Kidz English*. She presented a workshop about "Integrating Technology into Reading Classes," and attended several workshops and seminars in English language teaching. She participated in the annual CTELT Conference at the American University of Sharjah in 2003, CTELT Conference in Dubai in 2005, ELTS Conference in Dubai 2005, and the TESOL Arabia Conference in Dubai in 2006.