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Welcome to the fall 2021 issue of the Journal of Response to Writing! This issue once again establishes response as a practice with incredible breadth, depth, and variety. In this issue, five feature articles present research on writing and response in multiple languages (whether first or second), at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. You will read about interactions among students and those between students and teachers, as well as inquiries that come from the points of view of both feedback-givers and feedback-receivers. The authors also present studies that incorporate a creative variety of methodological approaches: reflective journaling, screen recording, interviews, stimulated recall, duoethnography, case studies, and more. Each article is briefly introduced below; we encourage readers to download them all to engage with each study in its entirety.

In the first of two articles in this collection that are centered around response in a language other than English, we include a study of 18 students who are learning Spanish. In “Spanish Writing Learners’ Stances as Peer Reviewers,” Emilia Illana-Mahiques and Carol Severino investigate...
how students interpret and enact peer review processes. They identify four “feedback-giving stances” or roles that students tend to adopt when responding to classmates’ writing: critical, sensitive, interpretive, or supportive. Illana-Mahiques and Severino share how the positionality of students during peer review can impact their commenting practices and overall decision-making, and that even when a group of students is given the same peer review training, the way they apply this knowledge can vary widely. The authors suggest that it is beneficial for teachers to give students the space to ask themselves two questions: Who am I during peer review? and What does this say about my own and others’ experiences with response?

The second study examines another multilingual context: this time, students who have Spanish as a first language (L1) and are learning French in Costa Rica. In “Student Engagement with Teacher Written Corrective Feedback in a French as a Foreign Language Classroom,” Maria-Lourdes Lira-Gonzales, Hossein Nassaji, and Kuok-Wa Chao Chao examine the different ways French as a foreign language (FFL) students engage with their teacher’s written corrective feedback (WCF). They identify three types of engagement: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. The authors found that students’ level of attention to feedback varied and was affected by their differing levels of affective and cognitive engagement. Their findings suggest that if teachers help students process the feedback they are given, students can better engage with that feedback. This result has implications for determining the effects of WCF on students’ writing and revision processes—from the feedback-receiver’s point of view. Lira-Gonzales et al.’s study is the first article of two in this issue that considers WCF.

“Toward a Better Understanding of the Complex Nature of Written Corrective Feedback and Its Effects: A Duoethnographical Exploration of Perceptions, Choices, and Outcomes” by Eva Kartchava, Yushi Bu, Julian Heidt, Abdizalon Mohamed, and Judy Seal is the second WCF-focused article in this collection. In this study, we get a glimpse into response from the feedback-giver’s point of view. This article is collaboratively written by

a teacher-educator and four graduate students who are all preservice teachers enrolled in a course on pedagogical grammar. The study incorporates duoethnography, a method of qualitative research in which two or more people simultaneously investigate a particular phenomenon and then reflect upon and potentially reconceptualize their experiences. Kartchava et al.’s study takes a look at grad students’ reflections on the process of giving WCF to English for academic purposes (EAP) students. The authors critically examine their understanding and practices of WCF, particularly how their previously held attitudes about feedback-giving impact their current practices. Readers can reflect on their own attitudes about and histories with response, and how these determine the ways they approach feedback in their own contexts.

Just as there is no definitive answer for how to give the “best” feedback, there is also no “best” answer for how to teach paraphrasing. Ling Shi’s study “Professors’ Views of Content Transformation in Students’ Paraphrasing” adds to the conversation and explores the question of what makes a good paraphrase. Shi interviewed 27 professors from across the disciplines who reviewed and responded to a collection of paraphrases written by graduate students. The study focuses on content transformation—the process students use between reading the text and paraphrasing it—as well as the ways teachers respond to these paraphrasing moves. This nod to intertextuality (Spivey, 1997) illuminates the connections that occur when students select, organize, and relate information to paraphrase in their own writing. One of Shi’s findings is that differences in teachers’ disciplinary or cultural contexts may lead to variation in their assessment of students’ paraphrasing capabilities. This finding suggests that paraphrasing is a skill that should be explicitly taught in specific disciplines and supported at the graduate level.

Our final featured article is another study that focuses on the practices of graduate students. Shakil Rabbi recounts a case study of one graduate student in “Uptake Processes in Academic Genres: The Socialization of an Advanced Academic Writer Through Feedback Activities.” Rabbi observes
how this student takes up feedback while writing research articles in her fields: political science and gender and women's studies. Graduate students often have the unique positionality of “simultaneously performing the role of expert and learning the content needed to be a full member of a discourse community” (this volume, p. 151), and this study identifies the genre competencies (Bawarshi, 2003) that are necessary for graduate students to enculturate and enhance their socialization into the academy and their fields. Rabbi suggests that, like paraphrasing (Shi, this volume), peer review and response activities should be incorporated at the graduate level.

A common theme running through each manuscript in this collection is the idea that writing and response are interactive, collaborative endeavors whose success hinges on communication with and the support of others. The diverse contexts present in this issue give readers the opportunity to reflect on the feedback networks we have all experienced at various points in our careers, whether as students or as teachers. We hope the diversity of research presented in this issue inspires you to think about response to writing in your own academic contexts and against the backdrop of your own material conditions. What unique ideas about response might you contribute to an upcoming issue? We encourage authors to submit manuscripts from any student age group, any language context, and any institutional type. Check out our new website/platform (https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/journalrw/) and follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter). We look forward to moving the conversation off the page and into the world! Thanks for checking out the fall 2021 issue of the *Journal of Response to Writing*.
References


Abstract: This study explores the attitudes and perceptions about online peer review of 18 Spanish learners enrolled in a third-year college Spanish writing course. Students participated in peer review training, wrote a personal narrative, and completed two online peer review sessions before submitting their final narrative. Using data from questionnaires, interviews, a peer review simulation task, and the first author’s journal, this qualitative study investigates students’ approaches to peer review and the different practices they employ when commenting on their peers’ drafts. Results show that even though students receive the same training, they interpret and enact that training differently. Students position themselves into specific feedback-giving stances: critical, sensitive, interpretive, and supportive. Two case studies show how two students’ particular stances as feedback givers (critical and sensitive, respectively) impact commenting practices and decision-making during the peer-review process. Based on these findings, recommendations for language teachers to enhance students’ awareness of themselves as feedback givers are drawn.

Keywords: online peer review, peer review training, feedback giving, comment types, College FL Spanish writing
Foreign language (FL) educators face the challenges of deciding how to best implement writing in the classroom and which practices can maximize students’ learning (Rollinson, 2005). Specifically, they have been exploring new ways of practicing writing that require not only assessing and assigning a grade to learners’ performances, but also engaging and motivating learners by creating environments more conducive to learning FL writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013; Hu, 2005). Common activities emphasized in FL writing pedagogy include collaborative writing, peer review, and peer assessment, as well as small-group brainstorming (Rollinson, 2005; Storch, 2013).

This study explores peer review in greater detail. Peer review is the process of working together in dyads or small groups to respond to one another’s drafts (Cho & MacArthur, 2011). The present study employs an online peer review activity in a Spanish writing course to investigate an under-researched topic: the stances that students take on as feedback givers and how those stances influence their commenting practices.

While much research has focused on the feedback students receive, the revisions they make, and the subsequent improvement of their essays, little focus has been given to the feedback-giving perspective and how it may impact overall peer review practices. This study takes a comprehensive approach to explore the feedback-giving role and offers insights into how students approach peer review, how their stances may influence their comments and their feedback-giving practices, and how training should best respond to students’ tendency to assume a fixed stance. Understanding these factors is relevant for optimizing students’ success in peer review.

**Literature Review**

The increasing use of peer review practices in second-language (L2) writing courses has attracted the attention of researchers and educators. Its value in promoting L2 writing development has been recognized in the changing culture of L2 writing pedagogy; the field of English as a second language (ESL) was first to initiate change, followed by FL (Reichelt et al., Illana-Mahiques, E., & Severino, C. (2021). Editorial introduction. *Journal of Response to Writing*, 7(2), 6–36.
While traditional approaches to L2 writing pedagogy focused on the finished product and assumed the teacher was the sole respondent to students’ writing, more recent L2 approaches to writing have shifted the focus to the writing process, increasing the agency of students in responding to their peers’ writing (Rollinson, 2005). Perceiving writing as a process involving multiple drafts and promoting student participation places peer review at the heart of L2 writing pedagogy (Berg, 1999).

Despite the widespread use of peer review and the growing body of research demonstrating its effectiveness, it remains an infrequently studied practice in FL college writing (O’Donnell, 2014). In the limited number of studies conducted, much research has investigated the reviewing stage (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Min, 2005), the revision phase (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998; Yang et al., 2006), and the conditions under which learners perceive peer feedback to be helpful (Rollinson, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Specifically, topics such as the changes writers make based on the comments they receive (Paulus, 1999) and factors that may influence the effectiveness of student feedback (Allen & Mills, 2016) have garnered most of the attention in peer review research.

While the revising stage has been frequently researched, little attention has been devoted to the feedback-giving stage. Areas that remain largely unexplored include students’ perceptions of their role as feedback givers, their ability to effectively carry out this role (Vorobel & Kim, 2014), and their ability to learn by reviewing (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In particular, research analyzing learners’ stances as feedback givers and how those stances influence peer review practices is scarce. Vorobel and Kim (2014) analyzed the feedback content of students’ oral discourse and found that learners simultaneously assumed the roles of readers (feedback givers) and writers (feedback receivers) as they scaffolded one another and worked toward a common goal. Students’ beliefs and perceptions about feedback giving, however, were not included in the study’s analysis.

Lockhart and Ng (1995) conducted a similar analysis with 27 ESL dyads and, by comparing them with one another, identified four reader stances
(authoritative, interpretative, probing, and collaborative). The positioning of the students, however, was assigned based on their oral interaction only, ignoring the written comments they gave and overestimating factors such as students’ lack of anonymity, power differences in the face-to-face interactions (Amores, 1997), and the complexity of orally conveying an FL message under time constraints (Min, 2005). Because these factors may shape both the types of comments made and the stances students assumed as feedback givers, more research is needed that explores whether students maintain the same roles when they perform anonymous FL peer review online.

Overall, the limited research on online FL peer review and prevailing assumptions regarding feedback-giving dynamics call for more research focusing on (a) written peer review interactions in an online FL context (Spanish), (b) the roles students assume as feedback givers, and (c) the strategies and procedures they follow when giving peer feedback.

First, this study addresses the need for more peer review studies in FL learning (e.g., Spanish). Unlike ESL, peer review research conducted in the FL context has been relatively sparse in languages other than English (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992), and in particular in writing Spanish (Amores, 1997; O’Donnell, 2014; Rodríguez-González & Castañeda, 2018; Sánchez-Naranjo, 2019). Moreover, Spanish FL research seldom focuses on online peer review, unless it is through collaborative platforms such as forums and wikis (Díez-Bedmar & Pérez-Paredes, 2012).

Second, previous studies analyzing the roles students may assume as feedback givers are few (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992), and the results of those studies interpret the oral comments students make. The present study fills a gap in that students’ beliefs and self-perceptions are used to identify the roles students assume as feedback givers. Specifically, students’ reflections about what peer review means to them and how they conceive of their goals and responsibilities when commenting constitute the main data for analysis.

Third, few studies verify students’ self-perceived roles against their actual commenting performance in a text selected by the researcher. This
experimental condition, in which all participants are asked to review the same text, makes it possible to compare how students of different peer reviewer stances use strategies and approaches to fulfill their perceived feedback-giving responsibilities. Overall, this study aims to shed light on students’ approaches to peer review, how their stances may influence their comments and their feedback-giving practices, and how training should best respond to students’ tendency to assume a particular stance. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do students think they engage in peer review, and what are their self-perceived stances as feedback givers?

2. What procedures do students who assume different feedback-giving stances follow when giving specific types of comments?

**Methods**

**Context and Setting**

Spanish 2000, also known as *Spanish Language Skills: Writing* at the large midwestern university where the study was conducted, is a multisec-
tion, upper level course emphasizing skill development in writing, critical reading, and oral communication. An essential part of the course involves writing formal essays of different modes, including description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. This study was contextualized in one of these major writing assignments—a personal narrative. To promote sim-
ilar content instruction and writing assignments, the same course module was embedded in all the Spanish writing sections. Moreover, to ensure a comparable teaching style, the first author taught the narrative-writing module with the support of the instructor of each section.

The online peer review sessions were carefully set up to be anonymous and randomized. That is, the identity of the reviewer remained undis-
closed throughout the peer review sessions; and instead of dyads, students were randomly assigned to one another (A → B → C → D) by the course software’s peer review program, PeerMark, a tool in Turnitin’s Feedback
Studio. Students were also encouraged to use their L1 (English) to comment on the peer's text. Overall, this setup was designed to allow students to express themselves more fully and confidentially (Ho & Savignon, 2007; Yang et al., 2006).

Participants

This study is part of a larger research project conducted in six sections of the third-year Spanish writing course. After the initial pool of participants received training and completed the writing and peer review assignments, the first author, who assumed the role of a teacher–researcher, selected the four sections that were most similar in terms of number of students, students’ linguistic skills, and classroom dynamics. From the 57 eligible students attending those four sections, a total of 18 students volunteered to participate in this study. The sample consisted of 16 females and two males. A higher ratio of females was expected since most students minoring or majoring in Spanish were female. Data collected from the 18 participants were analyzed to respond to the first research question regarding students’ perceptions of their roles as reviewers.

To answer the second research question, two case study participants who responded well to the extreme-cases principle were selected. Specifically, the two students differed according to the feedback roles they assumed, the variety of feedback types they used, and the scores obtained on their final essays. Here, the two students, with their assigned pseudonyms, are introduced.

The first case study participant is Mark, a 20-year-old male junior who had recently switched majors from math to Spanish. The second study participant is Amaya, an 18-year-old female freshman who had not yet declared a major but had decided to pursue a minor in Spanish. Both students were born and raised in the United States and had never lived abroad or participated in a study-abroad program. For both, it was their first time taking a Spanish course in college, but they had studied Spanish in high school for at least four years and reported feeling very comfortable with
their reading abilities. The narrative peer review project for this study was not their first time participating in peer review, as they had done so with English writing, but it was their first time doing peer review for a Spanish course and within an online context.

Data Collection

As part of the required coursework, participants were to complete a 3-week FL writing project consisting of a personal narrative, an essay in which students write about a true event that impacted their lives (e.g., an adventure, an accident, a travel experience). Students’ writing had to incorporate the key elements of a personal narrative (e.g., title, introduction, rising and falling action, conclusion), all of which were explained as part of the coursework.

Students first outlined and then fully drafted the personal narrative, and both versions (outline and draft) were peer reviewed and revised. After addressing the comments received in the draft version, students submitted their final versions to their instructor. The main sources of research data included all submitted drafts (outline, draft, and final) and the comments given and received during the two peer review sessions. During data collection, the first author also kept a reflective journal. The journal was used to reflect on positive and negative experiences with teaching and research processes, to ask questions and speculate about possible answers, and to jot down ideas that could be considered during the data analysis. The technique served as a source for triangulation and helped establish dependability, which refers to the extent to which the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2014).

Besides the data sources pertaining to the students’ coursework, data from other sources were collected. Prior to the project, participants filled out a background questionnaire to confirm their eligibility to participate in the study. Then, as a follow-up to the project, they completed a peer review simulation activity and an interview with the first author.
The simulation consisted of a 25-minute online peer review task, completed individually, on a sample text selected by the first author. The text was written by a student who had completed the same project the previous semester, but major adaptations were made so that participants would more easily find issues to comment on. The simulation task was similar to what students had previously completed for their course, but each participant’s performance (e.g., mouse moves, written feedback, verbalizations, commenting strategies) was screen-recorded with Panopto software to analyze the impact of students’ self-perceived peer review roles.

As soon as students finished the peer review task, they completed a 30-minute semistructured interview with the first author. Questions from the interview focused on students’ self-perceptions and the strategies they employed during peer review.

Data from each of the instruments were collected from all 18 participants. All data were analyzed, except for the peer review simulation activity, where only the two selected case studies were examined. The detailed data from this instrument allowed the researchers a more in-depth analysis in response to the second research question.

Data Analysis

Comment Analysis

The written comments generated by the participants in both the outline and the draft versions of the essay were analyzed, using a coding scheme similar to the feedback taxonomy employed in the peer review training. Comments, divided into feedback points, were coded as pertaining to the affective dimension, that is, comments that integrated patterns of emotion; or the cognitive dimension, that is, comments that targeted issues in the text that could be changed or improved in the revision (Lu & Law, 2012; Nelson & Schunn, 2009). Affective comments were further coded as praise and empathy (e.g., “very good”), explanation of praise comments (e.g., “I like how your title builds a little suspense for the reader”), or negative comments (e.g., “badly explained”). Similarly, cognitive comments

were categorized as (a) problem identification, (b) suggestion, (c) alteration, (d) justification, and (e) elaboration (Lu & Law, 2012; Min, 2005).

The following examples clarify the categories in the cognitive dimension: Problem-identification comments point out problematic issues in the text (e.g., “this sentence seems a little unclear”). Suggestion comments focus on helping the writer find appropriate solutions (e.g., “maybe you can provide some context here”). Alterations are direct corrections of the peer’s text, often related to issues of grammar, language, or style (e.g., “spell out the word instead of using the number”). Justification comments explain the reasoning behind a previous comment (e.g., “this will reduce the confusion readers may have”). Elaboration comments ask the writer for more information (e.g., “can you tell me more about the character?”). Figure 1 summarizes the coding scheme for the peer review comments.

Interview and Simulation Data Analyses

Interview data from each of the 18 participants were collected, transcribed, and de-identified. In response to the first research question, the first author highlighted in the interview transcripts all references to students’ self-perceptions as feedback givers. Through a process of coding, categorizing, and grouping the data into themes, participants were classified according to a specific set of roles emerging from the data. Tables of themes, codes, and corresponding interview quotes were manually created for each participant.

Similar steps were followed to analyze the simulation data for the two selected case studies. To respond to the second research question, all data from the two students, including verbalizations, descriptions of their behaviors during the peer review process, and the comments they gave were verified and put side by side in a chart, with the corresponding blocks of time (Meredith, 2016; Merriam, 2014). Data that referred to the students’ feedback-giving procedures, including the strategies and the steps they followed, were highlighted to facilitate the comparison within and between participants. To analyze students’ strategy use, points
Spanish Writing Learners’ Stances as Peer Reviewers • 15

Figure 1
Feedback Taxonomy Used to Classify Students’ Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFECTIVE DIMENSION</th>
<th>COGNITIVE DIMENSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praise and Empathy</td>
<td>Problem Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of the Praise</td>
<td>Suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Taxonomy is adapted from Lu and Law (2012), and Min (2005).

of agreement and disagreement between what students reported in the interviews and their behaviors in the simulation activity were analyzed. To analyze student’s step-by-step sequence, the similarities and differences between the two participants were explored in terms of the procedures they followed in the peer review activities.

In obtaining, reflecting on, and confirming the results, all relevant information, including the patterns emerging from the data, was regularly shared and discussed with the second author. The findings were also triangulated with the first author’s reflective journal entries, the reviewers’ comments given on the various assignments, and the students’ responses provided in the prestudy questionnaire. Finally, to establish internal validity (Merriam, 2014), several validation techniques including prolonged engagement, member checks, thick descriptions, and acknowledgment and reduction of bias were employed throughout the collection and analyses of data.

Results

The purpose of this study was to shed light on how students approach peer review, what roles they assume as feedback givers, and what strategies

and procedures they use in an L2 Spanish online peer review context. The first research question (i.e., how do students think they engage in peer review, and what are their self-perceived stances as feedback givers?) was addressed by identifying emerging themes that explained the students’ feedback styles and philosophy, as well as their perspective and attitude toward peer review. The second research question (i.e., what procedures do students who assume different feedback-giving stances follow when giving specific types of comments?) was addressed by analyzing two case studies of students who had differing goals, roles, and views on how to conduct peer review. The results for each research question are reported below, in separate sections.

**Students’ Engagement and Their Perceived Stances as Feedback Givers.**

The results obtained from analyzing the data of the 18 participants indicate that students use feedback to attain specific goals. Students adopted four goals for their feedback: (a) exerting control over the writer’s performance, (b) empathizing with the writer, (c) acting as an objective reader, or (d) motivating the writer. These goals are interconnected with the students’ personal stances, or their overall approach to peer review while working toward their goals. The stances that emerged from the data were: (a) critical, (b) sensitive, (c) interpretive, and (d) supportive. When comparing students’ stances against the actual comments they gave in the Spanish writing project, the authors found that students adopting the same feedback-giving stance show common patterns in how they approach peer review. Table 1 summarizes these peer review goals, stances, and dimensions of each approach. Then, in the subsections that follow, each stance is described in greater detail.

**The Critical Stance**

Of the 18 participants, a total of five students, three females and the two males, adopted a critical stance. Even though it is possible gender played a role in the results, not enough male participants took part in the study.
to confirm this. Overall, students with a critical stance adopt an evaluative attitude that judges the peer’s text in terms of what it lacks. By being very direct about the parts of the text that they think their peers need to address, these reviewers aspire to exercise influence over the writer’s performance.


**Table 1**  
*Summary Chart of Students’ Goals, Stances, and Dimensions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer review goals</th>
<th>Stances</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exerting control over the writer’s performance</td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>- Evaluative and critical attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tendency to directly highlight weaknesses, flaws, or mistakes in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Excessive use of problem-identification comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Little to no use of positive comments, as they are seen as useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing with the writer</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>- Empathetic attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Criticism is important, but careful attention is paid to language so that problems are conveyed in a respectful tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategic combination of different types of comments, with no preference for any particular type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting as an objective reader</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>- Objective and neutral attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Adoption of the role of a general reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Elaborative comments as well as short, general, and noncritical comments that are perceived as lower risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating the writer</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>- Positive and encouraging attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Connections with the writer’s experience, emotion, or voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Excessive use of positive comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Little to no use of problem-identification comments, as they are seen as unnecessary or not helpful in motivating writers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They do not differentiate between giving criticism (offering change-oriented comments) and being critical (adding a judgmental attitude to the feedback). Critical students, therefore, often display little tolerance toward weaknesses, flaws, or mistakes in a text. As Katia affirmed in the interview, “When I do peer review, I think of things they need to fix.” Mark gave a similar response: “I think more about what specifically I would change.” Later, he added, “I’m thinking about what seemed off, or what I think it might need [. . . ] every time I thought something was off or weird.”

The participants’ goal of exerting control over the writer’s performance was even more obvious when they were asked about how they wanted others to review their work. The question prompted students to describe their own preferences. For instance, Maggie affirmed, “I want that what I am saying comes off to you [as good], and if it doesn’t, I don’t want you to be scared to tell me that it doesn’t. [. . . ] I would love having all these comments on my paper.” Minerva responded similarly: “If I give someone my essay, I want it to come back covered in marks, like tell me what I did wrong, what you would like to see better, because otherwise it doesn’t get any better.”

The predisposition of critical reviewers to focus on a text’s weaknesses shaped the types of feedback comments they prioritized. These reviewers used problem-identification comments the most. Conversely, they were reticent to give positive comments, judging them as trivial and aimless. Minerva explained this perspective: “I feel like my job was to read it [the text] and then give them honest responses to what I thought. Not just to be like ‘Oh, it’s wonderful,’ because that doesn’t help anyone.”

The Sensitive Stance

Students adopting a sensitive stance ($n = 4$) demonstrate a disposition to empathize with their peers without excluding the positive benefits of providing criticism and evaluating their work. They convey their criticism cautiously, using less direct and less judgmental language in order to avoid conflict or disagreement with their peers. This attitude of acting
cautiously when giving criticism is essentially different from that of critical reviewers. Amaya, for example, distanced herself from being critical when she affirmed, “I was not trying to be too critical; I don’t really like being critical.” Paula also avoided this approach: “I may be a little less critical just because I don’t want her to feel bad about what she is writing, so I try to phrase it [the comment] in a way that isn’t meant to be critical.” Helena further explained her habit of rereading all her comments at the end of her review in order to “go back and make sure I did not sound angry on anything in my comments.”

In addition to being highly respectful, students who assume a sensitive stance characterize themselves as empathizing with the writer. They report using at least two strategies: (a) balancing positive comments with criticism and (b) scaffolding their comments in order to better connect and engage with their audience. The former strategy (strategy a) allows them to offer insightful criticism while also motivating writers to keep improving their text. Paula, for example, expressed how “I just wanted her [my peer] to know that, even though I was critiquing, she did a really good job.” Then she concluded, “I was completely honest while also giving a positive attitude.” Students who assume a sensitive stance use the latter strategy (strategy b) to explain and justify their comments, seeking to be understood and to persuade the writer to make changes according to their suggestions. Helena, for example, described how she tried to justify and explain her comments, “just so that first, she [my peer] could understand where I was coming from, and second, would take my comments seriously [. . .]. I think being able to explain your point of view toward anything gets people to consider it rather than just ignoring it.”

The Interpretive Stance

Students with an interpretive stance ($n = 5$) strive to understand and review the text from the reader’s position. Their main goal is to act as an objective reader who seeks to interpret and understand the content of the text and its narrative elements (e.g., title, rising action, etc.) They reported
using several strategies to attain this goal, such as “focus on what was happening” and “think about the story in the content itself” (Kelly), or “draw attention to big things” and “reiterate the main points” (Jane), generally to confirm their understanding and present additional ideas if needed.

On the other hand, whenever reviewers with an interpretive stance perceive that the writer is not coming across as intended, they ask for clarification by making short, simple, and general comments toward a more complete and clear essay. They perceive that their responsibility is to point out specific elements of the text that, from a reader’s perspective, may need more elaboration or explanation. As Rachel explained, “I thought that I was helping the most by saying different areas that needed more detail, by pointing out some areas where I thought she [my peer] could use a little more explanation so that I understood better.”

Another pattern appeared among interpretive participants. Wanting to act as objective readers, they tend to hide behind the figure of the general reader and show a timid attitude toward peer review tasks. Their comments tend to be short, general, and never too critical of the writers. In speculating on the possible causes for this positioning, students commented on their skeptical attitude toward peer review, their lack of experience and confidence giving comments, or their self-perceptions as poor reviewers.

The Supportive Stance

Students who take a supportive stance (n = 4) show a positive attitude toward the writer. Unlike the other peer review roles, supportive reviewers aim to motivate the peer, building on the good elements of the essay and encouraging a positive view of revising and making the text more vivid. As Esther affirmed, “I don’t think my job was to point out weaknesses. That’s kind of like putting down someone. Instead, it’s kind of to support them and to help them.”

In giving encouragement to writers, supportive students not only respect the writers’ decisions but further understand that their recommendations are options rather than solutions. As Sophie explained, “I was
giving enough suggestions, so that the person writing the story could have as many options as possible to fix it.” In contrast to critical and sensitive reviewers, supportive reviewers fail to identify problems as such and to give straightforward solutions to specific weaknesses in the text.

When supportive reviewers were asked about the reasoning behind giving positive comments, they expressed their desire to connect with the text and the writer at three different levels: (a) with the topic of the essay, so that they are “in that mindset [. . . ] in that zone” with the writer (Vicky); (b) with the feelings and emotions of the writer, showing them “that I know, [. . . ] that I understand” (Esther); and (c) with the writer’s voice and perceptions, responding to “the style [of the writer] and how this person is writing it” (Sophie).

Understanding Feedback Giving from the Lenses of Two Case Studies

The case study analysis allowed the researchers to find similarities and differences in how two students of different stances, critical for Mark and sensitive for Amaya, performed during peer review. When contrasting the attitudes and behaviors of these two students, a number of themes emerged that corresponded to the first-, second-, and third-round reading phases of peer review. Completing the peer review in three reading phases was neither instructed in the assignment for data collection nor taught in the training sessions. Instead, it was these students’ own choice and what they found worked best for them when doing peer review.

For each reading round, the emerging themes specify the different roles the two students assumed during peer review. In the second-round reading, however, the two students assumed a similar role (i.e., evaluative), but three subthemes emerged that clarify their differing behavior in giving feedback of specific types. Table 2 summarizes all themes and subthemes obtained in the analyses, each of which is described next as they apply to Mark and Amaya.
Table 2

Themes and Subthemes from the Data Analysis of Mark’s and Amaya’s Peer Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First-round</td>
<td>Diagnostic versus learner role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third-round</td>
<td>Preteacher role versus comment-refiner role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1. First-Round Reading: Diagnostic Versus Learner Role

The first time Mark and Amaya read the simulation-task essay, they did not make any comments, but the approaches they used differed. Mark’s approach was that of a diagnostician, quickly examining the text for signs of weakness and making predictions about what it would take to comment on the problems. For example, he hovered the mouse over the essay, skimmed the text quickly and silently, and immediately upon finishing his first-round reading, declared, “Well, I guess, it wasn’t great, wasn’t super exciting. I guess I don’t really understand the bullet marks [. . .].” This general judgement demonstrates Mark’s tendency to immediately identify areas of weakness. As he explained, “The first time is mostly just [to] read it over and then figure out how much work I’m gonna have to do with it.” He also clarified, “I kind of go over things that didn’t make sense to me.” This practice of assessing the work it will take to comment on a paper is evidence of Mark’s diagnostic approach.

Unlike Mark, Amaya’s approach to the first reading was that of a learner, cautiously reading the text aloud to ensure a better and more
complete understanding. Although she did not use additional resources in the simulation activity, she reported using the dictionary during the drafts’ peer review sessions. As she explained, “I just read through it once and I looked up words as I needed to, just to make sure that I understood what she [my peer] was talking about.” Therefore, Amaya’s purpose during the first reading is to fully understand or learn about the text in order to move forward with the commenting phase.

**Theme 2. Second-Round Reading: Evaluative Roles with Differing Behaviors in Problem Identification, Justification, and Positive Comments**

Mark and Amaya used the second reading to assess the peer’s text. When making judgments, both demonstrated acts of comparing their peer’s essay against a variety of resources, including previous experiences, the peer review guidelines, and their own assignment submissions. Despite using similar resources to evaluate their peer’s text, the two students differed in how they used specific types of comments, namely problem-identification, justification, and positive comments. For each feedback type, the subthemes that capture the differences between Mark and Amaya are explained next.

**Subtheme 2.1. Problem-Identification Comments: Intrusive Versus Considerate Approaches.** Mark’s and Amaya’s commenting performances were different when giving problem-identification comments. Mark took an intrusive approach, determined by three patterns or subcategories: (a) his holistic approach to peer review, (b) his use of judgmental language, and (c) his appropriation of reader and writer roles. First, Mark took a holistic approach in that he first read all the criteria from the peer review guidelines, and with those “in the back of [his] mind,” he assessed the quality of the text. When he first sensed that something in the text was amiss, he highlighted the area where a problem was present. As shown in Figure 2, his comments covered entire sections of the draft, to the point that only a few lines were left without highlighting.
Second, regarding the language of his comments, Excerpt 1 exemplifies how Mark used direct, straightforward phrasing that included negative forms (e.g., “this isn’t”), absolute terms (e.g., “never”), the use of second person to suggest changes (e.g., “you should”), and expressions such as “doesn’t capture my interest” or “seems a little out of nowhere,” all of which could be taken as rude by the receiver. These features are underlined below.

**Excerpt 1. Mark’s Commenting Features (Simulation Data)**

1. (Title): “This title does pertain to the story, but doesn’t capture my interest, nor does it make me want to read the story.”

2. (Conflict): “It seems a little out of nowhere, and maybe not chronological.”
Third, Mark’s judgmental commenting tendencies are also shown in that he simultaneously acted as a reader and as a writer, often wanting to solve the problems he identified according to his own preferences. For him, this is an act of “contributing to it [the story] myself.”

Taking a considerate approach, Amaya’s behavior in identifying problems is almost the opposite of Mark’s. Contrary to the patterns observed in Mark, Amaya’s attitude is determined by (a) an analytical approach to peer review, (b) the use of respectful language, and (c) differentiation between her role as a reader and as a writer. First, Amaya’s analytical approach entailed going paragraph by paragraph to compare each section of the text with its corresponding criteria in the guidelines. This technique allowed her to identify the discrepancies between the text and the guideline requirements. As shown in Figure 3, the discrepancies are expressed by locating the specific spots in which the writer could integrate changes.

Second, the examples in Excerpt 2 highlight the contrast between Mark’s (Excerpt 1) and Amaya’s (Excerpt 2) stances on the same textual elements. Amaya used respectful language by avoiding negative statements, including mitigating forms (e.g., “perhaps”), and using “I” to convey her view (e.g., “I think that [. . .]”). Questions, suggestions, or hedge expressions such as “maybe you could consider” or “I don’t know if” also served as transitions to many of her problem-identification comments. These features are underlined below.

Excerpt 2. Amaya’s Commenting Features (Simulation Data)

4. (Title): “The title makes the reader curious about how the wallet was lost, but maybe you could consider making the title a little bit more mysterious.”

5. (Conflict): “I don’t know if this sentence should be included because it doesn’t help to build your suspense.”

6. (Ending): “I think that it could be expanded a bit. Maybe talk about something that you will remember next time you are moving. In the moment, were you actually calm about losing your wallet?”

Third, Amaya acknowledged her responsibilities as a reader, which differ from those of the writer. For Amaya, the reader should avoid straightforward solutions and, instead, prompt the writer to think more deeply about their experience. Questions or elaboration comments such as the one used in Excerpt 2—“In the moment, were you actually calm?”—lead the writer to reflect and reconsider the text’s context.

Subtheme 2.2. Justification Comments: Problem-Oriented Versus Solution-Oriented Approaches. Mark and Amaya had different perceptions of what it means to justify or provide a rationale for a comment. For
Mark it meant expanding on a problem, explaining in detail “what I think is wrong,” and “narrow[ing] down why it’s weird.” Excerpt 3 displays some of Mark’s comments, and underlined are the justification comments that follow up an initial problematic point. These are problem-focused explanations because they help the writer understand the source of the problem.

Excerpt 3. Mark’s Approach to Justification Comments (Simulation Data)

7. (Conflict): “It seems a little out of nowhere, and maybe not chronological, as this whole time you’ve not needed your wallet, but you’re just mentioning it now.”

8. (Events of the narrative): “I would recommend this be a paragraph, and maybe a shorter one considering that this isn’t the story of the wallet being lost yet, it’s more of how you came to lose it, like an extension of the beginning.”

Contrary to Mark, Amaya’s justification comments were used not to explain the problems but to accompany suggestions that make her advice appealing to the writer. Excerpt 4 shows examples of her recommendations, such as adding more details about a character (Comment 9) or including dialogue (Comment 10). Then each recommendation is followed by a justification comment (underlined) that explains how the essay will improve if the advice is integrated. Specifically, the characters will acquire more depth (Comment 9), and the story will gain suspense and variety (Comment 10). These justification comments allow Amaya to validate her feedback and articulate her view, making her suggestion and elaboration comments more useful and convincing to the writer. These comments are solution-oriented because they expand on how the essay may benefit from the feedback.

Excerpt 4. Amaya’s Approach to Justification Comments (Simulation Data)

9. (Characters): “It might be a good idea to include more details about her [the aunt]. This would give her character more depth.”

10. (Scenes): “Throughout the body paragraphs, make sure to include dialogue [. . . ]. These additions will help to create suspense and also add more variety to your story.”
Subtheme 2.3. Positive Commenting: Softening Criticism Versus Endorsing Quality Work. The analyses of Mark and Amaya’s positive comments also yield important differences. Mark used positive feedback to soften criticism and make a problem or suggestion comment easier for the writer to accept. For example, in one of his comments on the draft, Mark first acknowledged what was good about the text: “You describe how you felt well.” After praising, he used a contrasting conjunction to shift the direction of his comment: “but it would help if the reader knew what it was like to be lost in Chicago.” As Mark admitted in the interview, for him, giving feedback in a peer review activity is “a good exercise [in] telling people that they’re wrong nicely.”

Conversely, for Amaya, positive comments aimed to encourage and motivate the writer. She combined positive comments with explanations of praise comments to convey her reactions to the text, specify what she thought was good, why it was good, and how it could influence the reader’s overall perception. For example, on the peer review draft assignment for the course, Amaya praised the title of the essay—“I like your title”—and clarified that what made it good was “because it already hints at the fact that something is going to happen on the walk.” This combination of praise comments with an explanation of the praise allowed Amaya to reinforce effective features of text, a practice compatible with Amaya’s purpose of providing encouragement and maintaining a positive tone throughout her comments.

Theme 3. Third-Round Reading: Preteacher Versus Comment Refiner

Mark’s and Amaya’s goal of the third reading was to revise their comments before submitting the peer review. The two students, however, had different purposes for reading over their comments. Taking the role of a preteacher, Mark found himself responsible for “catching everything,” making sure he “didn’t miss anything.” Aiming to help his peer “get a good grade,” he strived to replicate the procedures that instructors would
follow—reading through the essay and explaining or restating the areas that he thought should be addressed.

Amaya took the role of a comment-refiner, ensuring that her comments “made sense” and were relevant to the peer’s text. Unlike Mark, she did not read the essay all the way through on this third round. Instead, she took her own comments as a starting point and made sure they were comprehensible and “actually made sense.” She checked for coherence between the text and her comments, and also reread her comments many times, probably “more times than I needed to,” to proofread and check for language “mistakes.”

**Discussion**

The study investigated the perceptions of 18 students over a 3-week online peer review project carried out in an upper-level Spanish writing course. It drew on data from two selected case-study students from whom screen recordings of the procedures and strategies they employed in a peer review simulation activity were analyzed.

Results from the 18 participants identify the four stances that students assume when giving feedback: critical, sensitive, interpretive, and supportive. Each stance corresponds to a set of goals students seek to attain during peer review. Furthermore, the results demonstrate a tendency for students of the same approach to develop similar commenting patterns and give similar types of feedback. Students’ stances and what they reported doing during the reviewing sessions correspond well to their actual performances.

The four stances are consistent with what is found in previous literature. Students’ critical attitude was identified in previous research studies by the term *authoritative stance* (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992). Similarly, the *supportive stance* category parallels what other researchers labelled a *collaborative stance* (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992). Regarding the sensitive and interpretive stances, in other studies similar categories have been pointed out but often vary in

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terms of labels, definitions, and their corresponding features (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992).

Learning about the stances is vital because they correspond to students’ self-perceptions as feedback reviewers and further guide the students’ use of the different feedback types. The four stances also help practitioners understand that participants bring different goals and perspectives to peer review activities. Assuming that peer review training leads students to give richer and yet similar feedback comments underestimates the range of roles students assume when giving comments. This study has demonstrated that students receiving the same peer review training may differ in their approach to peer review in terms of the four stances: critical, sensitive, interpretive, and supportive. It is possible that students develop these stances based on their beliefs and perceptions about peer review, their views of their particular responsibilities as a feedback giver, and their past experiences with the types of feedback they have found most helpful for their writing.

Using the extreme-case selection technique, two students who had differing stances as feedback givers were selected. The relationship between the two students’ stances, the types of comments they prioritized, and the strategies they used during peer review were explored in detail. Results from the case studies confirm that the stances students assume as feedback givers play an essential role in how they choose and formulate their comments. Thus, students’ feedback and commenting practices are stance driven rather than text driven (i.e., driven by the quality of the peer’s text).

Results of the analysis further confirm how, despite receiving the same peer review training, there were dramatic differences in the strategies employed during peer review and how Mark and Amaya identified problems, added justifications, and gave positive feedback, especially in the simulation task. Even though they both reviewed the same text, followed a similar commenting sequence, and used the same types of comments, there were still substantial differences in their commenting practices that related to their stance as feedback givers.
Overall, Amaya’s role as a sensitive reviewer is evident in that she uses and combines her comments, demonstrating her peer-centered perspective while guiding the writer to evaluate and improve the text. Conversely, and from a critical stance, Mark’s practice of emphasizing problem identification not only contradicts the purpose of offering peers a variety of feedback types, a principle emphasized in the training, but may also be detrimental to writers concerned about improving their final performance. In support of this claim, previous literature has confirmed that justification comments from peers improve writers’ performance (Gielen et al., 2010), but lengthy explanations of problems damage not only students’ perceptions of themselves as writers but also their performance on their revised drafts (Nelson & Schunn, 2009).

In line with these findings, future studies could explore the effectiveness of teaching students to assess their comments for variety and sequencing of feedback types. For instance, a possible approach to encouraging learners to give a wider variety of feedback comments would be discussing with them the variety of feedback-giving roles, helping them identify their own roles and tendencies, and incorporating analytical practices that encourage them to make informed choices about the feedback they give to peers. Another study could investigate the results of raising students’ awareness about how the wording of comments not only affects a writer’s morale but further conveys the reviewer’s own stance and beliefs toward peer review. Finally, awareness-enhancing instructional interventions of this type could also be studied from the perspective of students receiving peer feedback.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to explore in detail how students give comments in L2 online peer review sessions. By comparing interview data and screen recordings of a peer review simulation, preliminary findings were obtained and further triangulated with students’ comment data, the background questionnaire, and the first author’s journal. Results of
the analyses confirm that students’ comments are not text driven (i.e., written according to the quality of the peer’s text) but stance driven. That is, students’ self-perceived stance as feedback givers is consistently expressed during the commenting process. Moreover, the stance students take is accurately represented in the strategies they employed during the screen-recorded simulated peer review session. Thus, strong connections exist among students’ beliefs, the procedures they say they follow during online peer review, and the types of feedback they prioritize when giving comments to peers.

The findings also point out the relevant commonalities between the stances identified in this study (critical, sensitive, interpretive, and supportive) and the ones found in the literature. The results, however, should be taken with caution because stance categories, even when given the same terminology, cannot always be considered identical. Future studies should analyze whether other FL college-Spanish writing students assume similar stances during peer review.

Focusing on the role of the students as givers of feedback, future peer review training sessions should consider enhancing students’ awareness about the different stances, helping them reflect on their tendencies to use specific strategies, and presenting other options they can adopt. For example, teachers can model how to combine the different feedback types and how to create richer and more helpful comments. Also, sample comments like Amaya’s and Mark’s could be used to show students how the different stances come across to their peers. Finally, teachers should point out the advantages associated with well-balanced responses that employ varied types of comments. This instruction will help students self-assess their practices and, ultimately, guide them toward more helpful peer feedback on L2 writing.

References


Abstract: This paper reports on an exploratory multiple-case study conducted to examine 6 French as a foreign language (FFL) learners at a university in Costa Rica and their affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagements with teacher written corrective feedback (WCF). We collected data through students’ writings (drafts and revisions), semistructured interviews, and stimulated recall interviews. We used the students’ writings to examine students’ behavioral engagement, and we used the semistructured and stimulated recall interviews to determine how students engaged cognitively and affectively with WCF. Findings revealed that although most participants initially reported mixed feelings and, at times, negative emotions upon the receipt of WCF, they overcame such feelings and became more positively engaged with the teacher’s WCF. All participants were able to detect the teacher’s WCF intention. However, only half of them reported using certain cognitive or metacognitive strategies when processing feedback. Even if their behavioral engagement was relatively high overall, the students’ affective and cognitive engagement varied.

Keywords: written feedback, behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, affective engagement

Many past and present studies have explored the provision and effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF; see Karim & Nassaji, 2019 for a recent review). However, little is known about how second language (L2) learners engage with WCF and, more specifically, how their engagement affects their writing accuracy. Furthermore, the few recent studies on learner engagement (e.g., Han & Hyland, 2015; Zhang, 2017; Zheng & Yu, 2018) have all been on English as either a second or a foreign language. Learner engagement, however, is a dynamic process that may differ across individuals and be influenced by both learner and contextual factors (e.g., Hyland, 2003; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010). Learner engagement may, for example, vary depending on learners’ cultural and educational background or the social relationship they have with their teachers and classmates (Han & Hyland, 2015). Little is known about how learners in different educational contexts pay attention to and process WCF. As Ellis (2010) pointed out, although oral corrective feedback research has examined the interaction of contextual factors with corrective feedback (CF; see also Goldstein, 2006; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017), overall these factors have not received much attention in research on WCF. This lack of attention represents a major limitation of current WCF studies. To fill these gaps, the present study investigated six French as a foreign language (FFL) students’ affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF and also examined how their affective and/or cognitive engagement impacted their behavioral responses to such feedback.

**Student Engagement and CF**

*Engagement* has been used as an umbrella term to bring together students’ degree of attention, curiosity, interest, and willingness to employ their language proficiency and a repertoire of learning skills to make progress (Zhang & Hyland, 2018, p. 91). Fredricks et al. (2004) proposed a tripartite conceptualization of student engagement encompassing three interrelated dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. *Behavioral engagement* refers to positive conduct in class and at school, involvement
in academic tasks, and participation in school activities. *Cognitive engagement* is concerned with strategic learning and psychological investment in learning. *Emotional engagement* includes students’ affective reactions in the classroom and at school, such as happiness, sadness, boredom, anxiety, and interest.

Ellis (2010) applied Fredricks et al.’s (2004) definition of engagement to CF. However, Ellis’s operationalization was slightly different. He defined *behavioral engagement* as student response to feedback in the form of uptake and revision, *cognitive engagement* as the way in which students attend to received CF, and *affective engagement* as students’ affective (e.g., anxiety) and attitudinal (e.g., dislike) responses to CF.

Drawing on a similar conceptualization, Han and Hyland (2015) also defined *student engagement* as a construct that includes the previously discussed three dimensions of engagement: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. They characterized *affective engagement* as students’ immediate emotional reactions upon the receipt of WCF, changes in these emotions, and attitudinal responses toward WCF. They represented *behavioral engagement* as what students do with the WCF received, including students’ revisions, whereas they used *cognitive engagement* to refer to investment in processing WCF, manifested in the degree to which students attend to WCF or in the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they use in processing WCF. Using this three-dimensional approach to learner engagement, Han and Hyland conducted a case study with four non-English-major Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Their findings provided evidence for student engagement within and across the behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions.

Using a similar design to Han and Hyland (2015), Zheng and Yu (2018) examined students’ engagement with WCF in EFL writing classes. However, they fine-tuned affective engagement by specifying the kind of attitudinal response learners provided to CF. Based on Martin and Rose (2003), they divided affective engagement into three subcategories: affect, judgment, and appreciation. *Affect* was defined as the feelings

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and emotions students expressed upon receiving WCF in conjunction with changes in these feelings and emotions when revising their texts. **Judgment** included personal judgments of admiration or criticism, as well as moral judgments of praise/condemnation toward WCF. **Appreciation** referred to the value students ascribed to teacher WCF. Zheng and Yu then collected data from 12 low-proficiency Chinese L2 English learners using oral reports recorded by students immediately upon receipt of feedback, as well as semistructured interviews. Their findings showed that while the participants’ affective engagement was relatively positive, their behavioral and cognitive engagement was not extensive, in the sense that their behavioral engagement did not necessarily result in greater language accuracy. Zheng and Yu (2018) also reported that students’ lower English proficiency negatively influenced their cognitive and behavioral engagement with WCF and caused imbalances among the three subdimensions of engagement.

Han (2017) also examined students’ engagement in an EFL context, but her focus was on the extent to which students’ beliefs mediated their engagement with WCF. She conducted a qualitative multiple-case study involving six Chinese EFL university students. Her findings showed a notable relationship between learner beliefs and learner engagement with WCF. For example, she found that a student who identified himself as an underachiever did not experience any negative emotions when receiving teacher WCF because he never expected to write anything error free. Han’s study also showed a relationship between students’ perceptions about WCF and their engagement, with those who experienced negative feelings being less engaged with WCF.

These few are the only studies so far conducted on learner engagement with WCF. Thus, this area of research is still underexplored compared to the research on the provision and effectiveness of WCF. Moreover, although these studies have shown evidence for students’ affective and cognitive engagement, they have not examined how the two forms of engagement affect one another or how students’ engagement impacts their writing...
accuracy. In addition, all three aforementioned studies focused on an EFL context. Therefore, little is known about how and to what extent students learning other languages engage with and process WCF. As noted earlier, learner engagement is context specific, and research, therefore, needs to examine learner engagement in different instructional contexts (Ellis, 2010; Goldstein, 2006). To fill these gaps, the present study examined six French as a foreign language (FFL) students’ affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement when they received CF on their written errors. It also examined how their affective and/or cognitive engagement impacted their behavioral responses to WCF. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What linguistic errors do learners make in a Costa Rican tertiary-level FFL classroom, and what WCF is provided by their teacher to address these errors?
2. How do learners affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally engage with the teacher’s WCF?
3. What impact, if any, do learners’ affective and cognitive engagement have on their behavioral engagement in the form of revision?

Method

Research Context

The current study took place at a Costa Rican university that offers an FFL program. At the time of the investigation, there were 150 students and 30 teachers in the program. The academic year is divided into two semesters, each lasting 16 weeks. Most French classes meet for 3 hours a week. In 2017, the teachers in the FFL program were encouraged to reconsider their written corrective practices and were asked to incorporate evaluation grids and standardized correction codes to improve teacher WCF provision. These changes were motivated by the participation of several FFL teachers in a research project that examined the development of formative
assessment practices among FFL university teachers to aid efficient WCF provision.

Participants

We recruited participants from an intact class, Written Expression (WE) II, in the FFL program. There are three WE courses in the program, and while all focus on writing, they vary in terms of language level and goals. We selected WE II because its goal is to teach argumentative essays. Argumentative writing is one of the most difficult written genres in higher education for both second-language (SL) and foreign-language (FL) learners, who often face difficulties using complex syntactic forms in their argumentation (Ka-kan-dee & Kaur, 2014). Therefore, we thought it would be worthwhile to examine what kind of errors these students make, what WCF teachers provide for their students, and how these students engage with this feedback.

There were six students registered in the WE II class, and we invited them all to participate in the study. There were four male and two female students aged between 20 and 28 in the class. All of them were Spanish speakers and, according to their classroom placement test, were considered to be at an intermediate level of French proficiency. Table 1 shows the students’ background information.

The teacher of WE II, a native Spanish speaker who is also proficient in French, has a PhD in Measurement and Evaluation and had received specific training for both teaching and responding to students’ writing during his university studies in teaching FFL. He has 20 years of experience teaching FFL and, at the time of the study, was teaching a course on grammar and written expression in French.

Data Collection

The data collection started at the beginning of the semester and lasted for 3 weeks. It involved four WCF-revision stages. In Stage 1, the first week of the study, the students wrote an argumentative five-paragraph
essay in class. The teacher selected the essay’s topic, which was about the use of technology in school. The teacher gave a picture prompt to the participants about two students who were supposed to do an assignment for their written French class. The picture showed one student carrying many books from the school library, whereas the other student was holding a tablet. The teacher asked students to answer the question about which student took the best approach to handle the assignment and justify their answers in an argumentative five-paragraph essay using between 300 and 350 words. In Stage 2, at the beginning of week 2, the teacher provided WCF on each individual text. The CF was in any form that the teacher deemed appropriate. In Stage 3, at the end of the 2nd week, the students received their original text with the teacher’s WCF and revised their text

Table 1

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English (basic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All names are pseudonyms.
in response to the WCF. On the same day, during class time, students wrote a second draft incorporating the received WCF and submitted it to the teacher. In Stage 4, during the 3rd week, one-on-one semistructured interviews (in Spanish) and stimulated recall were carried out with each student participant within 24 hours of receiving their revised drafts. The semistructured interview examined the learners’ overall perspectives on feedback and the stimulated-recall interview examined learner engagement. For the stimulated recall, the researchers showed the students copies of their draft and revised texts and asked questions about how they engaged with and processed the feedback. The interviews lasted for around 60 minutes and were video recorded and transcribed for analysis. The questions for the interviews are presented in the Appendix. Figure 1 shows an example of the kinds of questions asked during the stimulated-recall interview, along with a student’s response.

Figure 1
Interview Excerpt and Screen Shot of Student Writing

Interviewer: What does this code mean?
Student: It means that there is a problem with a verb.
Interviewer: So, what does the teacher want you to do here?
Student: He wants me to revise the verb tense, here I use the infinitive of the verb permettre (allow) when I should have used the past tense, that is permis (allowed) because the action took place yesterday and yesterday refers to the past tense.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of two phases: (a) a quantitative analysis of student errors, types of WCF, and students’ behavioral reactions to WCF in the form of revisions (i.e., behavioral engagement) and (b) a qualitative analysis of transcriptions of the semistructured and stimulated-recall interviews (to address students’ cognitive and affective engagement). The three types of WCF engagement were determined according to a conceptual framework adapted from Zheng and Yu (2018; see Table 2).

First, we analyzed learners’ linguistic errors, teacher WCF types, and learners’ revision in response to their teacher’s feedback. We identified and categorized the errors according to a taxonomy adapted from Ferris (2006), which included word choice, verb tenses, articles, singular/plural agreement, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement. Then, we calculated error rates based on the number of errors.

Table 2
Conceptual Framework for Learner Engagement With WCF; Adapted From Zheng and Yu (2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of engagement WCF</th>
<th>Subconstructs of each dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective engagement</td>
<td>Affect: Students’ feelings and emotions expressed upon receiving WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judgment: Personal judgments of admiration/criticism, as well as moral judgments of praise/condemnation toward WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciation: Students’ value of WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral engagement</td>
<td>Revisions in response to WCF—these are responses used to improve the accuracy of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive engagement</td>
<td>Cognitive processing of WCF (i.e., showing awareness of the presence of feedback)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

per 100 words in each participant's first draft (total number of errors/total number of words x 100). We coded the types of WCF provided by the teacher according to the error-correction categories adapted from Guénette (2009; see Table 3 with examples from the data).

To investigate the learners’ behavioral engagement, we cross-linked the original errors in their first drafts, which had been treated with WCF, to their revised parts in each student’s subsequent draft. The revisions in response to WCF were identified and categorized based on the textual-level changes students made, using the taxonomy of Ferris (2006) and Han and Hyland (2015). We used the following response categories: correct revision, incorrect revision, deletion, substitution, and no revision (see Table 4 with descriptions and examples from the data).

For these analyses, we calculated intercoder reliability, for which we invited an additional coder, a university FFL teacher with a master's degree in teaching FFL, to examine the students’ drafts and the teacher's WCF. She and the first author initially coded approximately 50% of the textual data independently (the original and revised drafts of three student participants, together with the teacher’s WCF). The agreement rates for the identification and categorization of errors, teacher WCF occurrences, and revision operations were 93%, 98%, and 91.6%, respectively.

For learners’ cognitive and affective engagement, we adopted an inductive approach, qualitatively analyzing transcripts of learners’ interviews. Following Han and Hyland (2015), prior to the coding process, we organized the transcripts by individual participants and read each participant data file iteratively. We then highlighted and coded the textual segments that provided relevant insight to the research questions. Next, we produced a narrative of each student’s engagement with WCF, compared codes across data files, and clustered codes that shared similarities into categories and subcategories. We calculated intercoder reliability for this analysis as well. We invited an additional coder (the same coder previously mentioned) to code all the interview transcripts. Initially, the overall intercoder agreement rate for engagement was 70.8%. Most disagreement was
### Table 3

*Types of WCF; Adapted From Guénette (2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of CF</th>
<th>Description and example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct error correction without comment</td>
<td>Correct form is provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>les libres électroniques ont beaucoup d’avantages</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>livres</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct error correction with metalinguistic explanations</td>
<td>Correct form is provided with explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>L’utilisation des appareils électroniques</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>des appareils électroniques (pluriel + accord)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[plural + agreement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification requests</td>
<td>The teacher asks a question to understand what the student means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>une énorme quantité de livres dans une seule machine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>un dispositif, une clé USB?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[a device, a USB key?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect error identification</td>
<td>The error is underlined, highlighted, or color coded. The correct form is not provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>grace à la grande capacité</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[this word is highlighted because it contains a spelling error]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect error identification with error code</td>
<td>The type of error is spelled out, but the correct form is not provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Alors, étant donné que les livres</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>O [code O = orthographe =&gt; spelling]</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect error identification with comment, question, or explanations</td>
<td>The type of error is indicated using comments or questions. The correct form is not provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Maintenant, verrons le côté positif de la situation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>l’impératif de voir?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[what is the imperative mode of see?]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
Learners’ Revision Categories; Adapted From Ferris (2006) and Han and Hyland (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision operation</th>
<th>Description and example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct revision</td>
<td>The error was corrected as intended by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le fait d’avoir de problèmes de visibilité peut souvent</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Error: word choice] =&gt; <em>Le fait d’avoir de légers problèmes de vision peut souvent</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect revision</td>
<td>The error was revised incorrectly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>les tecnologies peuvent aider les élèves</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Error: spelling] =&gt; <em>les tecnologis peuvent aider les élèves</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion</td>
<td>The marked text was deleted to address the error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nous pensions et nous sommes convaincus que la technologie n’est pas parfaite</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Error: verb tense] =&gt; <em>Nous sommes convaincus que la technologie n’est pas parfaite</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>The marked text was substituted by a correction not suggested by the teacher’s feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nous trouvons que la technologie joue un rôle important</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[we find that technology plays an important role] =&gt; <em>Évidemment la technologie est cruciale</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Clearly technology is crucial]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No revision</td>
<td>No revision was made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nous devons seulement avoir un appareil numérique_</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>surfer en ligne_</em> cliquer sur le lien et</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Error: punctuation, missing comma] =&gt; <em>Nous devons seulement avoir un appareil numérique surfer en ligne cliquer sur le lien et</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resolved after discussion. The final intercoder agreement rates for behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective engagement were 94.6%, 98.1%, and 98.5%, respectively.

Results

Error and WCF Types

The first set of analyses examined patterns of errors in students’ writing and the types of WCF students received. Table 5 shows the types of errors found. Students made a variety of errors, including errors involving sentence structure, word choice, subject-verb agreement, word form, singular/plural agreement, and punctuation. Among these error types, spelling was the most frequent (37%), followed by sentence structure (20%). However, the types of errors differed from student to student. For example, while the most common type of error made by Ben was subject-verb agreement (40%), followed by spelling (20%), the most frequent type of error made by Charlie was spelling (57%), followed by sentence structure (23%). As for Helen, sentence structure was her most common error type (36%), followed by word choice (27%) and singular/plural agreement (27%). Paola’s most frequent type of error, however, was word choice (39%), followed by sentence structure (22%) and punctuation (22%).

Table 6 shows the types of WCF students received. The most frequent type was indirect WCF (five out of the six students received predominantly indirect WCF). However, the nature and the frequency of the WCF differed across students. For example, the only WCF type that Charlie received was indirect WCF with an error code (100%). However, Helen received both indirect WCF with a comment and direct WCF. Paola, Chris, and Gerald received direct WCF less frequently (17%, 4%, and 25%, respectively). Most of the WCF Ben received was indirect WCF with a code (74%), with only a small percentage of indirect error identification with a comment and direct error correction (13% each).
Table 5
Types of Errors in Students’ First Drafts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SS(^1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WCh(^2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sp(^3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S-V(^4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>WF(^5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sg/Pl(^6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>P(^7)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paola</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
\(^1\)SS = sentence structure
\(^2\)WCh = word choice
\(^3\)Sp = spelling
\(^4\)S-V = subject-verb agreement
\(^5\)WF = word form
\(^6\)Sg/Pl = singular/plural agreement
\(^7\)P = punctuation

Table 6
WCF on Students’ First Draft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Type of WCF</th>
<th>Indirect with code</th>
<th>Direct without code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect with code</td>
<td>Direct without code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paola</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 shows the teacher’s WCF and students’ revisions. As can be seen, students were able to incorporate all of the teacher’s direct WCF, followed by some indirect WCF with an error code (62.07%) and, to a lesser extent, indirect WCF with a comment (42.86%). As can also be seen, students who received indirect WCF with a comment made more incorrect revisions (29%) than those receiving indirect WCF through codes. They also chose to delete errors instead of revising them more often than students who received indirect WCF with codes (14% and 2%, respectively). In terms of no revision, both groups of students who received indirect WCF (with a code and comment) responded similarly to the teacher’s WCF (16% and 14%, respectively).

Table 7
Teacher WCF and Students’ Revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of student revision</th>
<th>Type of teacher WCF</th>
<th>Indirect with code</th>
<th>Indirect with comment</th>
<th>Direct without comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No revision</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect revision</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct revision</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>62.07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following sections, we will present the findings related to each student’s affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement.

Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive Engagement

As noted earlier, affective engagement concerns students’ personal judgments, feelings, emotions, and appreciation expressed when receiving WCF, whereas cognitive engagement refers to the cognitive strategies

learners report having used when receiving WCF. Behavioral engagement concerns learners’ behavioral response to WCF in the form of revision. In the following sections, we will present the results of these different types of engagement and their relationship for each student participant.

Ben

Ben’s interview responses included many statements that provided evidence that he was affectively engaged with WCF to a great extent. For example, when he saw examples of WCF, he first experienced negative emotions, but he quickly replaced them with positive emotions by showing appreciation for the value of WCF and stating that it was useful in helping him avoid making the same mistake in the future:

Estuve sorprendido por algunos errores que cometí porque eran evidentes. En esos casos, me sentí algo descorazonado por los errores tontos que hice. Pero nada tan serio. Sé que la próxima vez prestaré más atención y lo haré mejor. [I was surprised by some of the errors I made because they were so evident. In those cases I felt a bit discouraged for the silly mistakes that I made. But nothing that serious. I know that next time I will pay more attention and I’ll do better.]

Por ejemplo, yo sé que *homme* se escribe con doble *m*, pero supongo que no estaba prestando atención cuando escribí con una *m*, por eso me sentí tan frustrado y estúpido que estoy seguro que nunca más volveré a cometer el mismo error. [For example, I know that *homme* is written with double *m*, but I guess I was not paying enough attention when I wrote it with just one *m*, so I felt so frustrated and stupid that I am sure that I will never ever make the same mistake again.]

Ben stated that feedback was not only helpful for improving students’ writing but also motivating, as it showed signs of learning:

La retroacción es muy importante porque nos ayuda a identificar nuestros errores, las áreas en las que tenemos que mejorar y también porque nos muestra lo que ya hemos aprendido. Cuando recibo mi ensayo y veo que tengo menos errores que en mi anterior ensayo me siento bien y motivado. [Feedback is very important because it helps us to identify our errors, the areas that we need to improve,
and also because it shows us what we have already learned. When I receive my essay and see that I have fewer errors than in my previous essay, I feel good and motivated.

Ben appreciated the value of indirect WCF: “Me gusta cuando el profesor me da una pista más que cuando él me da la respuesta correcta porque en mi caso lo que viene fácil, fácil se va. [I like when the teacher gives me a clue rather than when he provides me the right answer because in my case, easy comes, easy goes.]” Ben also received predominately indirect WCF (87%). His positive attitude toward indirect WCF could have contributed to his high behavioral success in revising his text (see Table 8).

Ben’s cognitive engagement with WCF was also relatively extensive, as he was able to identify the teacher’s intention in all cases and provide accurate metalinguistic explanations for each of his revisions during the interview, as the following excerpts show:

Aquí me di cuenta que cometí un error con la concordancia entre el sujeto y el verbo. El sujeto está en la forma singular pero el verbo está en plural. El profesor escribió la pregunta: ¿Por qué usaste el plural? Me preguntó porque él quería que yo corrija la concordancia entre el sujeto y el verbo, y eso es lo que hice. [Here I noticed that I made a mistake with agreement between the subject and the verb. The subject is in a singular form, but the verb is in a plural form. The teacher wrote the question: “Why did you use plural?” He asked me that question because he wanted me to correct the agreement between the subject and the verb, and that is what I did.]

He also used cognitive strategies such as deconstructing a sentence to identify agreement errors:

Cuando tengo que corregir errores de concordancia, en lugar de buscar en el diccionario, leo la oración y trato de deconstruirla en pequeñas partes para poder encontrar el problema. Leo la oración tratando de prestar atención a cada palabra. [When I have to correct agreement errors, instead of looking it up in the dictionary,
I read the sentence and try to deconstruct it in small pieces so that I can find where the problem is. I read the sentence trying to pay attention to each word.

As a result, Ben was highly successful at revision, correctly revising 90% of his errors (Table 8).

**Charlie**

In contrast to Ben, Charlie showed an affectively low engagement with WCF. He did not provide any emotional comments on any of the WCF he received and explicitly reported that receiving WCF did not produce any emotional reaction in him, for he expected it as part of the learning process:

Recibir retroacción del profesor no me generó ninguna emoción en particular, ni positiva, ni negativa. Estoy preparado para eso. Espero recibir retroacción de su parte porque es parte del proceso de aprendizaje. [Receiving my teacher’s feedback did not generate any particular emotional reaction in me, neither positive nor negative. I am prepared for that. I expect to have feedback from him because it is part of the learning process.]

Charlie's cognitive engagement was also relatively minimal. During the interview, he was able to provide metalinguistic explanation for only one out of the five types of errors he was asked to revise, as shown below:

Aquí el profesor escribió S por structure de la phrase. Cuando estaba revisando me di cuenta que en lugar de escribir du fait escribí de le fait y ese es un error común para mí porque transfiero la estructura del español, todavía no me acostumbro a usar du en lugar de de le. Soy una persona de hábitos. Eso significa que todavía voy a cometer el mismo error. [Here the teacher wrote an S for sentence structure. When I was revising, I realized that instead of writing *du fait* I wrote *de le fait*, and that is a common mistake for me because I transfer the structure from Spanish. I am still not used to *du* instead of *de le*. I am a person of habits. That means that I will still make the same mistake.]

He also reported that he would, on some occasions, make a substitution for an erroneous form without understanding why the teacher marked the original as erroneous:

Aquí el profesor escribió el código Voc por vocabulario al costado de la palabra dont y para ser sincero, hasta ahora no sé por qué dont no es correcto . . . Cambié dont por otra palabra, pero sigo sin entender cuál fue el problema. [Here the teacher wrote the code Voc, for vocabulary, next to the word dont, and to be honest, I still don't know why dont is not good . . . I changed dont for another word, but I still don't know what the problem there was.]

Despite Charlie’s minimal cognitive engagement, his behavioral engagement was relatively moderate, in that he successfully revised 68% of his errors (see Table 8). He expressed his preference for receiving indirect WCF through codes: “Pienso que usar códigos para dar retroacción es la forma más efectiva para dar retroacción, porque es rápida, confiable y precisa. [I think that using codes to provide feedback is the most effective way to provide feedback because it is fast, reliable, and accurate.]” Since all the feedback instances he received were also indirect WCF with code, this could have contributed to his relative success at revision.

Chris

Similar to Charlie, Chris’s affective engagement with WCF was mostly negative. He experienced frustration and disappointment when he received the teacher’s WCF, and he reported that WCF had a negative impact on his self-confidence:

Cuando recibí mi borrador con todos esos errores, me sentí frustrado porque quería aprender, rendir mejor que eso. Estuve decepcionado porque no estoy en el nivel correcto. Cuando estaba revisando, me sentí más frustrado porque no sabía cómo corregir, por los códigos, no sabía qué hacer. Entonces, perdí la confianza en mí mismo también. [When I received my draft with all the errors, I felt frustrated because I wanted to learn, to perform better than that. I was disappointed because I am not in the right level. When I was revising, I felt more and more frustrated]
because I did not know how to correct, because of the codes, I did not know what to do. So I lost my self-confidence, too.]

Chris’s negative attitudes toward WCF were also evident through his personal judgment and criticism about the type of WCF he received, as the following excerpts from the interview show:

El profesor usa códigos para todos los estudiantes, pero no todos los estudiantes aprenden de la misma manera. Yo no aprendo con códigos. Necesito tener la corrección del error. Ya sé que estoy equivocado, pero no sé cuál es la solución. [The teacher uses codes for all students, but not all the students learn in the same way. I don’t learn with codes. I need to have the correction of the error. I already know that I am wrong, but I don’t know what the solution is.]

Me gustaría que el profesor me dé instrucciones más detalladas sobre qué y cómo corregir mis errores además de usar códigos de tal manera que yo pueda identificar mi error en el futuro. [I wish the teacher gave me clearer and more detailed instructions about what and how to correct my mistakes other than just using codes so that I can identify my error in the future.]

His negative attitude might have contributed to his low cognitive engagement. During the interview, he was able to provide explanations for only one out of the six types of errors he received WCF on. However, his data showed that he was sometimes accurate about the intention of the teacher: “Aquí el profesor utilizó O por ortografía e hizo un círculo en la sílaba. Entonces comprendí que había un problema en la ortografía de esa sílaba. [Here the teacher used the code Sp for spelling and circled the syllable. So I understood that there was a problem with spelling in that syllable.]”

He also acknowledged his weakness in spelling and vocabulary:

Cuando estaba escribiendo mi borrador, tuve cierta dificultad para encontrar las palabras correctas para expresar mis ideas. Cuando recibí el borrador corregido, me di cuenta que tuve muchos errores gramaticales. Me di cuenta que tenía que prestar más atención a la ortografía y a la utilización de vocabulario también. [When I was writing my draft, I had some difficulty finding the right words to express my ideas. When
I received the corrected draft, I realized that I had made many grammar mistakes. I realized that I had to pay more attention to spelling and using vocabulary, too.

The criticism expressed by Chris was probably related to his particular background. He was the only participant with a full-time job: “No tengo todo el día para buscar la respuesta porque tengo un trabajo a tiempo completo. [I don’t have all day to look for the answer because I have a full-time job.]”

Overall, Chris’s low cognitive and negative affective engagement with the teacher’s WCF might have contributed to his relatively limited behavioral engagement compared with the other participants. As Table 8 shows, he correctly revised 55% of his errors in addition to making a notable number of incorrect revisions (20%).

Gerald

Similar to Ben and different from Charlie and Chris, Gerald reported a high degree of affective engagement. Overall, he had a very positive attitude toward WCF and its role in improving his writing. In particular, Gerald valued indirect WCF, noting, “me gusta cuando el profesor me da una pista para encontrar mi error porque me siento responsable de mi revisión. [I like when the teacher gives me a clue to find my mistake because I feel that I’m responsible for my revision.]” Gerald’s positive attitude toward WCF aligned with his personal judgment of its value: “Es extremamente importante para mejorar nuestra escritura. La retroacción nos permite entender nuestros errores y darnos cuenta sobre cuál es nuestro real nivel de dominio del idioma. [It is extremely important to improve our writing. Feedback allows us to understand our mistakes and realize what our language proficiency level really is.]”

Gerald stated that his emotional reaction to WCF depended on the type of error he made:

Mi respuesta emocional depende del tipo de error, por ejemplo, si es algo nuevo para mí e intenté lo mejor que pude, entonces no me siento mal; pero, si es un...
error tonto o un error que siempre cometo, entonces experimento más sentimientos negativos como por ejemplo frustración. [My emotional reaction depends on the type of error, for example, if it is something new for me, that I tried my best, then I don’t feel that bad, but if it is a silly mistake or an error that I always make, then I experience more negative feelings like frustration.]

Algunas veces me siento frustrado cuando hago errores tontos, cuando me doy cuenta que era obvio que esa no era la forma correcta de hacerlo. [Sometimes I feel frustrated when I made silly mistakes, when I realize that it was obvious that it was not the right way to do it.]

His positive attitude toward feedback might have contributed to his relatively high level of cognitive engagement. He was able to provide accurate metalinguistic explanation for four out of six types of errors:

Cuando estaba escribiendo mi primer borrador, estaba más concentrado en el contenido de mi ensayo que en la gramática. Cuando recibí la retroacción del profesor, me di cuenta que se pasaron errores de ortografía, así como de errores sobre los tiempos verbales. [When I was writing the first draft, I was more focused on the content of my essay than on grammar. When I got the teacher's feedback, I realized that I overlooked the spelling mistakes as well as verb-tense errors.]

He also stated that he used different cognitive strategies when revising, including identifying the type of error he made and deconstructing the sentence:

Lo primero en lo que me concentro cuando revise mi texto es el código que el profesor me da, y luego con el código identifico qué tipo de error he cometido. Luego, en el caso de vocabulario, por ejemplo, trato de encontrar una palabra que significa lo mismo y la uso en el lugar de la palabra equivocada. [The first thing I focus on while revising my text is the code the teacher gives me, and then with the code, I identify what type of error I’ve made. Then, in the case of vocabulary, for example, I try to find a word that means the same and use it instead.]

En el caso de la concordancia, analizo las palabras que rodean el error. Trato de deconstruir la frase en pedazos y luego trato de encontrar una forma para
organizar la oración en la forma correcta. [In the case of agreement, I analyze the words surrounding the error. I try to deconstruct the phrase in chunks, and then I try to find a way to organize the sentence in a good way.]

Gerald’s positive affective response to WCF, including his appreciation of its value and high cognitive engagement, could have contributed to his notable degree of behavioral success in the form of revisions (68%; see Table 8). Despite high affective and cognitive engagement, Gerald’s behavioral enjoyment was lower than that of Ben. The disparity between his WCF preference (which was indirect WCF with comments) and the feedback type he received could partially explain this difference. Only 7% of the feedback he received was indirect WCF with a comment (although there was a fair amount of indirect WCF with codes).

**Helen**

When Helen received her first draft with WCF, she felt discouraged and surprised at the number of errors she had made. She stated, “Cuando recibí mi primer borrador corregido, me sorprendí porque había errores que no tenía idea que estaban incorrectos. Más aún, estaba segura que estaban bien. [When I got my first draft corrected, I was surprised because there were errors that I had no idea they were wrong. Moreover, I was sure they were right.]” However, her expressions of appreciation showed her affective engagement with WCF to be relatively high. In particular, she valued indirect WCF through codes: “Me parece útil la forma que mi profesor corrige mis errores utilizando códigos, porque él me dice que hay un error, pero me da también una pista sobre el tipo de error que es. [I find it useful the way my teacher corrects my mistakes using codes, because he tells me that there is a mistake but also he gives me a clue of what kind of mistake it is.]” She also expressed appreciation for her teacher’s WCF overall. She compared him with her other teachers and reported that it was the first time she had a teacher so devoted to his job, who took the time to correct her essay more than once.

Helen’s cognitive engagement was also relatively extensive, which could be partially related to her positive affective engagement. She was able to provide metalinguistic explanations for all the WCF she had received and for the revisions she had made. The following excerpts contain some examples:

Aquí el profesor escribió el código *A* por *accord* [concordancia]. Es porque cometí un error de concordancia con el sustantivo y el adjetivo. Es sustantivo *lives* [libros] en plural y el adjetivo *numérique* [digital] estaba en singular. Entonces debe de haber concordancia entre ambos, ya sea los dos en plural o los dos en singular. Por lo tanto, corregí y añadí una *s* en *numérique*. [Here the teacher wrote the code *A* for agreement. It is because I made a mistake with the agreement of the noun and the adjective. The noun was *lives* in the plural form, and the adjective *numérique* was in the singular form. So there must be agreement between both: either both plural or both singular. Therefore, I corrected and added an *s* in *numérique*.]

En este caso, el profesor utilizó el código *Voc* por vocabulario, porque escribí digital, como lo usamos en español, y debí escribir *numérique*. Y ahora sé porque busqué en la internet en WordReference. Escribí en español libro digital y lo traduje al francés. Entonces encontré *livre numérique*. [In this case, the teacher used the code *Voc* for vocabulary because I wrote *digital*, as we use in Spanish, and I should have written *numérique*. I now know because I looked for it on the internet in WordReference.1 I wrote in Spanish *libro digital* and translated it to French. So I found *livre numérique*.]

She was also able to acknowledge why she made some certain errors:

Aquí, el profesor marcó *O* por ortografía. Cuando revisé me di cuenta que no había escrito esta palabra correctamente, pero fue porque no estaba prestando atención, no porque no sabía cómo escribirla. [Here, the teacher marked *Sp* for spelling. When I revised, I noticed that I hadn’t written this word correctly, but it was just because I was not paying attention, not because I didn’t know how to write it.]

Despite Helen’s relatively high affective and cognitive engagement, her behavioral engagement was moderate. As Table 8 shows, she correctly

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1 WordReference (https://www.wordreference.com/) is a free online dictionary.
revised 64% of her errors. A contributing factor could be that she was surprised and discouraged by her many errors: “Cuando recibí mi ensayo con la retroacción del profesor y vi que tenía tantos errores me descorazoné porque no me lo esperaba. Cuando tengo un par de errores, no me molesta. [When I received my essay with the teacher’s feedback and I saw that I had a lot of errors, I felt discouraged because I didn’t expect that. When I have just a couple of errors, then it doesn’t bother me.]”

Paola

Paola initially experienced negative feelings when receiving teacher WCF:

Cuando leí el comentario del profesor al final de mi ensayo sobre que debería usar un diccionario para revisar el vocabulario, estaba confundida porque eso es lo que hago. Pero aparentemente, no se nota en mi trabajo. Entonces ya no sé qué más puedo hacer, y también me siento frustrada porque el profesor no especifica a qué palabras se está refiriendo. Entonces no está claro. [When I read the teacher’s comment in the end of my essay stating that I should use a dictionary to revise the vocabulary, I was confused because that is what I do. But apparently, it doesn’t show in my work. So I don’t know what else I can do, and I also feel frustrated because the teacher doesn’t specify which words he is referring to. So it’s not clear.]

However, despite this initial reaction, like Ben and Gerald, her emotional responses to WCF turned out to be positive overall. She valued the importance of feedback and reported that WCF allowed her to recognize her progress:

Me siento feliz cuando recibí mi ensayo corregido porque me di cuenta que no tuve tantos errores. Entonces sentí que había mejorado desde el comienzo del semestre. Estoy satisfecha porque ahora puedo entender lo que significan los códigos. Al comienzo, fue más difícil saber lo que se suponía que yo debería hacer. [I felt happy when I received my corrected essay because I noticed that I didn’t have many errors. So I felt that I have improved since the beginning of the semester. I’m satisfied because
now I can understand what the codes mean. At the beginning it was more difficult to know what I was supposed to do.]

However, in contrast to Ben and Gerald, Paola’s cognitive engagement with WCF was relatively limited. During the interview, she was able to provide accurate metalinguistic explanations for only one out of the five different error types she made:

En este caso, por ejemplo, cuando vi el código A, me di cuenta que hice un error de **accord**. El adjetivo posesivo que usé son no concuerda con el sujeto ils. [In this case, for example, when I saw the code A, I realized that I made an error of agreement. The possessive adjective I used, *his*, does not agree with the subject *they*.]

Aquí el código **S** significa que tengo un problema con la estructura de la frase. Debe haber algo que falta, pero no tengo ni idea de cuál es. [Here the code **S** means that I have a problem with the sentence structure in the phrase. There must be something missing, but I have no clue what it is.]

Despite her low cognitive engagement, Paola was able to correct 78% of her errors, which shows that her behavioral engagement was relatively high (see Table 8). Part of the reason for this could be the high percentage of indirect WCF she received, which was mainly WCF with a code (77%), and thus, although she was able to detect the intention of the teacher’s WCF and her errors, she was unable to self-correct them all the time.

**Summary**

Table 9 shows a summary of the degree of the different types of engagement and their relationships. High and low affective and cognitive engagements in this table were based on the number of times each of the students reported evidence of being cognitively or emotionally engaged when shown the errors on which they had received WCF during the stimulated recall. These statements were tallied and categorized into high or low, depending on median scores. The degree of behavioral engagement was based on the percentages of correct revisions. Those who revised
their errors more than 70% of the time were categorized as relatively high; those who revised their errors between 60% and 70% of the time were categorized as relatively moderate; and those who revised their errors less than 60% of the time were categorized as relatively low. As Table 9 shows, of the four learners who showed a high level of affective engagement, two also showed a high level of behavioral engagement, and two showed a moderate level of behavioral engagement. This suggests that learners’ affective engagement positively impacted their behavioral engagement overall. As for cognitive engagement, two of the three learners who showed a high level of engagement showed a moderate level and one showed a high level of behavioral engagement. However, two of the three showing a low level of cognitive engagement showed a moderate or high level of behavioral engagement, which suggests that these two learners’ high-level cognitive engagement did not necessarily lead to a high level of behavioral engagement in the form of revisions.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Correct revision</th>
<th>Incorrect revision</th>
<th>Delete text</th>
<th>Substitution</th>
<th>No revision</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>9 90</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 10</td>
<td>10 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>27 68</td>
<td>5 13</td>
<td>2 5</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>6 15</td>
<td>40 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>42 55</td>
<td>15 20</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>14 18</td>
<td>76 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td>30 68</td>
<td>9 20</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>5 11</td>
<td>44 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>7 64</td>
<td>2 18</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 9</td>
<td>1 9</td>
<td>11 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paola</td>
<td>14 78</td>
<td>3 17</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 6</td>
<td>18 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

A Summary of Learner Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

This multiple-case study examined three research questions: (a) What linguistic errors do learners in a Costa Rican tertiary-level FFL classroom make and what WCF is provided by their teacher to address these errors? (b) How do the learners affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally engage with the teacher’s WCF? and (c) What impact, if any, do learners’ affective and cognitive engagement have on their behavioral engagement in the form of revision?

Findings show that students made a range of errors, among which spelling errors were the most frequent type. The many spelling errors could be explained by the high ratio of homonyms in French; that is, words that sound alike or represent similar concepts, but are not necessarily written the same way. For example, *bois* [wood], *boit* [drink], *voix* [voice], *voie* [way], and *voit* [saw] are all pronounced the same, despite their obviously different spellings. Another reason could be the presence of diacritical marks or accents such as the grave accent (ê) or the circumflex (è) that do not exist in Spanish (the students’ L1). In addition, there are some silent consonants in French. For example, the “s” at the end of most words is silent in French, as in *vous* [you], *temps* [time], and *champs* [fields], but is pronounced in Spanish.
WCF was provided mostly through indirect feedback with error codes (about 90% of the time), which could be interpreted as the teacher’s preference for this feedback type. Nevertheless, there were differences among the learners with respect to the type of WCF they received. For example, while the only WCF type that Charlie received was indirect WCF with error codes, Helen received both indirect WCF with a comment and direct correction at an equal rate. These differences suggest that the teacher might have adjusted his WCF strategies to each student’s needs.

The data also indicate varying degrees of affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF. Affectively, most participants initially reported mixed feelings after receiving WCF. However, most of them overcame their initial feelings and turned them into positive attitudes. All six participants recognized the corrective intent of the teacher’s WCF, but only half reported using certain cognitive or metacognitive strategies when processing this feedback. These findings are consistent with Han and Hyland (2015), who reported that even when learners acknowledged the occurrence of an error, they often failed to grasp the relevant metalinguistic rules, regardless of whether or not they attempted to process WCF at a deeper level. Our findings thus may point to the depth (noticing vs. understanding) at which the learners processed WCF.

Our findings show that learner behavioral engagement was relatively extensive. Overall, students were able to successfully revise most of their errors (over 60%). However, the degree of revision differed among students and also varied depending on the type of WCF. For example, although students received fewer instances of direct WCF compared to indirect WCF, all direct WCF instances led to correct revisions. This trend could be due to the more explicit nature of direct correction and the fact that the feedback provided the correct form. However, only 62% of indirect WCF with a code led to correct revisions. For indirect WCF to be successful, learners should have enough prior linguistic knowledge to be able to self-correct their errors (Nassaji, 2016). Since the students in this study were at an intermediate level and most errors were spelling errors, it is possible that
they did not have prior knowledge of many of the incorrect forms and therefore were unable to successfully self-correct all those errors when receiving WCF.

Our findings also point to a possible relationship between affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. For example, most of the learners who showed a high level of affective engagement also showed moderate to high levels of behavioral engagement. Conversely, most of those who showed low engagement or a negative attitude toward feedback also showed a low level of behavioral engagement. For instance, Chris and Charlie, who reported negative reactions or did not produce any emotional response to feedback, also showed a lesser degree of behavioral engagement when compared to the other students. On the other hand, Ben, who showed more positive reactions and appreciation for the value of WCF, also showed a relatively high degree of behavioral engagement and was more cognitively engaged with feedback, using strategies such as deconstructing the sentence into smaller parts when receiving WCF. These findings suggest that affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of engagement are interrelated and that positive attitudes toward feedback may promote deeper cognitive reactions which might, in turn, enhance revisions (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Chen et al., 2016; Ellis, 2010; Zhang, 2017). Therefore, any study of learner engagement with WCF should take into account this interrelationship and its facultative effects on students’ writing.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the types of written linguistic errors learners in a Costa Rican tertiary-level FFL classroom made and the kinds of WCF their teacher provided to address these errors. It also examined the affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of these learners upon receiving WCF. The study provided important insights into how learners process WCF and what effect it has on their writing. Overall, our findings point to the different degrees to which learners engage with WCF as well as the importance of both cognitive and affective factors in learner engagement. The data also

highlight how learners’ affective reactions and cognitive processing are interrelated, but they may not often influence learner responses to WCF in the same way.

Pedagogically, these findings have important implications. First, they suggest that students’ level of engagement with WCF may vary. Therefore, teachers should try to identify students whose level of engagement is low, determine the reason for low engagement, and assist them in processing the WCF more effectively. The results also show that WCF responses can be influenced by learners’ positive reactions and attitudes toward WCF. This finding highlights the importance of this variable on WCF effectiveness. Hence, teachers should attempt to provide individualized WCF in ways that foster learners’ emotional engagement. In this study, most participants who initially experienced mixed feelings when receiving WCF developed positive responses when they realized that feedback improved their writing. This finding suggests that teachers should not be overly concerned if students initially react negatively to feedback but rather should encourage learners to see its benefits. Teachers should also be aware that even when students can recognize the corrective intention of a piece of WCF, it does not imply that the students will be cognitively engaged with it or be able to learn from it. Deeper cognitive engagement requires not only awareness of what the WCF is about but also an adequate level of the knowledge, strategies, and resources needed to respond effectively. Thus, teachers should attempt to help learners in this area by teaching them the tools or resources they need to take an active role in their learning. If learners know strategies they could use to process WCF, they may be more likely to engage with the feedback.

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, it was conducted with only six students, so the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. To increase generalizability, studies with more students and in different contexts are needed. Second, since only two drafts of the same writing assignment were analyzed, development or change in learner engagement with regard to WCF, as well as patterns of

their responses over time, was not investigated. Therefore, it is worthwhile to conduct studies involving more drafts and utilizing more longitudinal methods of inquiry. Since, as mentioned earlier, engagement is a dynamic process influenced by both learner- and context-related factors, future research could investigate how learner engagement interacts with these factors. In particular, research on how WCF engagement interacts with various learner individual differences would be useful.
References


and learning: Research, theory, applications, implications (pp. ix–xv). Routledge.


Appendix

Interview Questions

Questions for the Semistructured Interview

1. Cuéntame sobre tu experiencia de aprendizaje al escribir los dos borradores de tu ensayo en francés. [Tell me about your learning experiences of writing two drafts of this French essay.]

2. Tu profesor te ha dado retroacción en tus errores en este borrador. En general, ¿qué piensas de la retroacción que tu profesor te dio en estos errores? [Your teacher has given feedback on your errors in this draft. In general, what do you think of your teacher’s feedback on these errors?]

3. Los profesores dan retroacción en errores lingüísticos de diferentes maneras, como por ejemplo subrayando, dando la respuesta correcta, dando pistas o códigos, y comentando en el margen. ¿Qué tipo de retroacción prefieres y por qué? [Teachers give feedback on linguistic errors in many ways, such as underlining, providing the right answer, giving clues or codes, and commenting in the margin. The interviewer shows examples in the draft. What type of feedback do you prefer? Why?]

4. ¿A qué punto entiendes la retroacción que te dio tu profesor en estos errores? [To what extent do you understand the teacher’s feedback on these errors?]

5. ¿Te gustaría que tu profesor cambie la manera de dar retroacción sobre tus errores? ¿Por qué? [Would you like your teacher to change the way he gave feedback on errors to you? Why?]

Questions for the Stimulated-Recall Interview

The interviewer selects at least one example of each type of error (Ferris, 2006) from Draft 1 and asks the following questions regarding different examples:

1. ¿Qué quiere tu profesor que hagas aquí? [What does the teacher want you to do here?]
2. ¿Cuál fue tu error aquí? [What was your mistake here?]
3. ¿Qué quiere decir este código/círculo/color, y así sucesivamente, aquí? [What does this code/circle/color, and so forth, mean here?]
4. Usualmente, ¿cómo utilizas la retroacción que tu profesor te da sobre tus errores cuando revisas tu borrador? [How do you usually use your teacher’s feedback on your errors to revise your drafts?]

*The interviewer selects at least one example of each type of error (Ferris, 2006) from Draft 1, shows examples of the student’s revision in the final draft, and asks the following questions:*

5. ¿Qué es lo que hiciste para corregir este error lingüístico? [What did you do to correct this linguistic error?]
6. ¿Cómo te sentiste inmediatamente después que recibiste tu primer borrador con la retroacción de tu profesor? ¿Te sientes de la misma manera ahora? [How did you feel immediately after you received your first draft with teacher feedback? Do you feel the same way about it now?]
7. ¿Qué hiciste con estos errores lingüísticos en tu primer borrador? [What did you do with these linguistic errors in your first draft?]
8. ¿Qué piensas de la retroacción de tu profesor en estos errores de este primer borrador? [What do you think of your teacher’s feedback on these errors in the first draft?]
9. ¿Tienes algún otro comentario sobre la retroacción de tu profesor en tus errores lingüísticos o alguna reflexión sobre tu experiencia de aprendizaje en general? [Do you have any other comments on teacher feedback on linguistic errors, or reflections on this learning experience in general?]

Abstract: Despite a large body of research into the benefits of corrective feedback (i.e., teachers' reactions to students' incorrect use of the target language), little is known about how new and experienced second-language (L2) teachers supply feedback to writing and what factors guide their decisions. This paper is a collaborative effort of 1 teacher-educator and 4 graduate students to examine the process of providing written corrective feedback (WCF) to university-level L2 learners. Findings point to complexities involved in WCF provision and the importance of examining CF holistically, as preservice teachers' corrective choices and learners' responses to them are often interlinked.

Keywords: written corrective feedback, preservice teachers, reflective practice, second-language writing, teacher training
In their recent volume on *Good Language Teachers*, Griffiths and Tajeddin (2020) described “good” teachers as aware, reflective, autonomous, and “complex individuals who are expected to have a range of personal qualities, to be able to satisfy the needs of their students, and to have the knowledge and skills to provide instruction in a range of language areas” (p. xxvi). In light of the ever-changing requirements, expectations, and instructional contexts that teachers encounter throughout their careers, these qualities, the authors argued, are necessary for practitioners to develop and consistently refine as they work to become, and remain, effective. While teacher quality is generally equated to performance that can be observed in the classroom, it is the unobserved process of how teachers arrive at knowing what they know and doing what they do that may be the key to understanding teachers’ perceived competence. Discerning this “unobservable dimension of teaching” (Borg & Santiago Sanchez, 2020, p. 17), or teachers’ “inner lives” (Farrell, 2018), is, in fact, the basic premise of research on teacher cognition since “we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding their thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do” (Borg, 2006, p. 163); this understanding may also be instrumental in cultivating self-aware, reflective, and self-directed (i.e., “good”) teachers.

Attempts to understand teachers’ effectiveness have primarily investigated their beliefs and ability to reflect on practice. While inquiries into teachers’ beliefs have confirmed a link between beliefs and practice, they have also exposed the bidirectionality and complexity of the relationship (e.g., Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Borg, 2018) that precludes making reliable predictions of teachers’ behavior based solely on their stated beliefs (e.g., Basturkmen, 2012; Kartchava et al., 2020). Still, Borg and Santiago Sanchez (2020) posited that because “beliefs are just one of the many influences that determine what teachers do” (p. 17), adherence or nonadherence to one’s beliefs in practice should not “detract from a teacher’s perceived competence.”

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1 The term *beliefs* is used to refer to teachers’ “suppositions, commitments, and ideologies” (Calderhead, 1996, p. 715) or the “hidden elements” of teacher cognition (Borg & Santiago Sanchez, 2020). As such, *beliefs* is used as an umbrella term for perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, and so forth.

competence” since numerous external factors (e.g., curriculum, contextual constraints, learner needs) may influence teachers’ actions. However, being able to analyze one’s actions, beliefs, and thoughts about teaching through reflection can help teachers become aware of and understand the factors that shape their practice, with the goal of critically assessing and positively affecting its quality (Alemi & Tajeddin, 2020; Farrell, 2018). Empirical examinations of teacher reflection have shown it to be both beneficial and challenging (e.g., Wolfensberger et al., 2010; Yayli, 2009) and have identified factors (e.g., teaching/learning experiences and lack of reflection training) that can promote or impede the practice (e.g., Farrell, 1999a, 1999b; Soodmand Afshar & Farahani, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Studies of reflection on teachers’ corrective feedback practices are rare (cf. Delante, 2017), especially those that address feedback to second-language (L2) writing—“a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by an L2 learner” (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p. 1). Having teachers reflect on their written corrective feedback (WCF) practices is important since feedback to writing is a staple of L2 instruction and carries benefits for the development of learners’ accuracy and L2 knowledge (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Moreover, language learners have consistently signaled that they value teachers’ feedback and expect to receive it on their writing (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1995). Asking teachers to reflect on their WCF views and actions, then, can not only help them connect theory to practice and make informed pedagogical decisions as a result but also raise awareness of the existing gaps and potential obstacles in the general as well as the context-specific implementation of WCF. Such reflection opportunities, or reflective practice, need to begin during preservice teacher training to engage trainees in “feedback literacy development” that exposes them to “broad WCF [theoretical] principles [and] entails a [contextualized] understanding of effective feedback principles” (Lee, 2019, p. 533). To support trainees in their WCF reflective practice, teacher-educators are advised to take on the role of “critical friends,” who guide and constructively assess the reflection.
process with the goal of enhancing the trainees’ awareness and understanding of effective WCF procedures (Lee, 2019). The present study represents such an endeavor.

This paper is a collaborative effort on the part of one teacher-educator and four candidates for a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics attending a graduate seminar on pedagogical grammar. It examines the process of guided reflection the graduate students underwent in providing WCF to L2 learners attending a university-level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. The study adopts duoethnography to investigate the participants’ experiences when they provided feedback to student writing.

**Teacher Reflection**

The ability to reflect on one’s teaching—before, during, and after the act—is a hallmark of successful teachers, who strive to not only understand the reasons for their actions in making informed decisions about their practice to increase its effectiveness but also avoid pitfalls that lead to impulsive teaching, or worse, burnout. Farrell (2015, 2018) claimed that it was precisely to avoid the latter that the field of TESOL adopted reflective practice, a now commonplace component of language-teacher education programs worldwide. The reflection that new teachers are asked to engage in, however, is often individual, highly regimented, and written, and it primarily focuses on a taught lesson (i.e., “reflection-on-action,” Schön, 1987) to engage teachers in “remedial” thinking on what went wrong with their teaching and why (Farrell, 2015). While “reflection-for-action” and “reflection-in-action” activities may be more impactful in helping teachers connect theory to practice in order to anticipate and skillfully address future and on-the-spot issues, many available models of reflection prioritize the technical issues in teaching, foregoing the person doing the reflection (Farrell, 2015). Furthermore, these models do not systematically differentiate between new and experienced teachers, who tend to have different concerns and needs when it comes to their development and who may require additional, tailored supports in reflecting “on their practice if
their reflections are going to be more than mere descriptions of what they do” (Farrell, 2015, p. 20). To account for the whole person, Farrell developed a holistic framework that considers both the cognitive and affective aspects of a teacher in terms of his or her philosophy, principles, theories of practice, and actual practices, as well as the effects of these four factors on the teacher’s impact on society and vice versa. Still, Mann and Walsh (2013) posited that the process that practitioners undergo when reflecting often goes unreported and called for a “rebalanced” approach to reflective practice, “away from a reliance on written forms and taking more account of spoken, collaborative forms of reflection; in sum, [they] argue[d] for a more dialogic, data-led and collaborative approach to reflective practice” (p. 291).

Lawrence and Lowe (2020) argued that duoethnography can be that “rebalanced” approach for language teaching and applied linguistics. A method of qualitative research, duoethnography involves two or more people reflecting on and (re)conceptualizing their experiences with and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Norris & Sawyer, 2017). Duoethnographers are simultaneously investigators of a given phenomenon and the sites of research themselves (Lawrence & Lowe, 2020). In this way, the participants tell and “interrogate” their own stories to learn from an experience that is subject to contextual and societal changes; the experience, in turn, requires the contributors to be open, self-critical, reflective, and trusting of the process (Norris & Sawyer, 2017). This makes duoethnography an effective tool in enabling deep and rich reflections among teachers at any stage of their development.

Duoethnographies in applied linguistics are rare. While some studies have used the method to investigate such issues as native-speakerism (e.g., Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016) and the successes/failures of teaching English as an international language (Rose & Montakantiwong, 2018), the most recent volume on the subject (Lowe & Lawrence, 2020) expanded the use of duoethnography to studies that employ it as a method of research, a reflective practice, and a pedagogical tool. We, however, know of no investigation

that has used duoethnography to examine the feedback provision that L2 teachers undertake. Using the method with preservice teachers—that is, those with no or limited formal teaching experience, undergoing initial teacher training (Borg, 2006)—may prove especially useful in identifying possible gaps in their WCF knowledge to allow for “in time” learning within the training program they are attending. Having preservice teachers themselves examine the processes they undergo in learning about WCF may deepen their engagement with feedback and promote future reflections necessary for their development as teachers.

WCF

Although many scholars have agreed that WCF plays a facilitative role in L2 development (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Kang & Han, 2015), various factors that may contribute to or impede the effectiveness of WCF are not yet well understood. One such factor is the effectiveness of the strategies teachers use to address learners’ errors. While direct feedback includes strategies that supply an actual correction of an error, indirect feedback cues learners to the presence of an error with the goal of having them provide the correction themselves. Crossing out a problem word, inserting a missing morpheme, or writing the correct form above or near the error, alone or with an accompanying explanation, are all examples of direct-feedback techniques (Ferris, 2006). To provide indirect feedback, teachers can hint at the presence of an error without locating it, mark its location, provide a metalinguistic clue about the error, or use codes to indicate the error type. While both feedback types can positively affect written texts (Ferris, 2010), their contributions differ. Direct feedback clearly outlines the error and a way to correct it, reducing the cognitive processing required by the learner, yet its long-term effects are unclear (Ellis, 2009).

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As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, the studies reviewed in this section include those in which CF was provided by researchers and by classroom teachers. While we acknowledge this important distinction, our aim here was to highlight the findings of extant research on the various decisions that teachers tend to make in determining how to address L2 students’ writing. This information was deemed essential in preparing the participating preservice teachers for the task of providing WCF and represented the readings done for this purpose in the graduate seminar.

Indirect feedback is more likely to yield durable learning effects thanks to its problem-solving orientation (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Empirical investigations that have compared effects of the two feedback types in the short (incorporation of feedback in revisions) and long (improved accuracy in new pieces of writing) term have suggested a more prominent role for the direct type (cf. Truscott & Hsu, 2008), which has been found to positively affect learners’ accuracy in revisions and new texts alike (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012; Kim et al., 2020; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; van Beuningen et al., 2008, 2012). Yet, a recent meta-analysis on WCF effectiveness (Kang & Han, 2015) did not find a clear difference between the WCF types, suggesting that efficacy may be intertwined with other moderating variables, such as learner proficiency.

Ferris (2002) posited that direct feedback should be supplied to lower proficiency learners who do not yet possess sufficient L2 knowledge to self-correct. This advice has been supported by teachers, who prioritize direct feedback with beginners and indirect feedback with intermediate and advanced learners (Bitchener, 2012; Lee, 2004). In a recent study on the types of WCF techniques Canadian English as a second language (ESL) teachers used in three different educational contexts (primary, secondary, and college), Lira Gonzalez and Nassaji (2020) found that teachers employ direct feedback to address errors of primary and secondary students and indirect feedback to treat college learners’ errors. Furthermore, the more proficient (secondary school and college-level) learners were able to revise their writing more accurately than their lower proficiency counterparts. Similar results were found in Korean as L2 classes (Park et al., 2015), in which intermediate learners revised more errors than the beginners.

Error type may be a factor in determining the effectiveness of WCF types. Ferris (2006), for example, found that teachers supply indirect feedback to “treatable” errors and direct feedback to “untreatable” errors. Linguistic structures that follow a grammatical rule belong to the “treatable” category, whereas “untreatable” errors are idiosyncratic and may include many structures (Ferris, 2011). Ferris (1999) suggested that direct
feedback may be more effective with untreatable errors since it clearly marks the error and supplies correction; indirect feedback may yield more impact with “treatable” errors. Still, Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that indirect feedback could also be effective at least some of the time in addressing “untreatable” errors. Other error categorizations have been developed and include such dichotomies as global versus local (errors that interfere with whole/global intelligibility [i.e., content and organization] vs. those at the surface [i.e., grammar and mechanics]), stigmatizing versus nonstigmatizing (errors that might offend native L2 readers), and frequent versus infrequent (frequency of a particular error type in relation to other types) (Sheen, 2011). While Ferris (2002) advocated for teachers to address errors that are treatable, global, stigmatizing, and frequent, “it is not easy to see how such criteria can be applied by teachers” (Sheen, 2011, p. 46). Descriptive studies (e.g., Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2008) have, instead, categorized types of errors that teachers address with CF, finding prevalence for errors in grammar and lexicon. Having analyzed 2,506 errors addressed by preservice ESL teachers, Guénette and Lyster (2013) developed 13 categories that focused on grammar (sentence structure, verbs, agreement, word order), lexicon (determiners, word choice, word form, word missing, prepositions), mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, spelling), first-language (L1) use, and style. The preservice teachers prioritized spelling, grammar, and lexical errors, seeing them as either most common among the learners they worked with or belonging to the “treatable” category. Using similar error categories, Lira Gonzalez and Nassaji (2020) found a comparable distribution of error types (grammar, lexical, and spelling errors) that their in-service teachers addressed with WCF.

Another factor in WCF-effectiveness research is the scope of correction because teachers are often faced with a decision of whether to respond to all (unfocused feedback) or a selected few (focused feedback) errors in a student’s text. When making the decision, teachers worry about both pedagogic and affective aspects (Ellis, 2017), wanting to balance learners’
preference for feedback to all in-text errors (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Jean & Simard, 2011) with the affective dangers that overcorrection may yield (e.g., Brown, 2009; Ellis, 2017). Researchers working within a cognitive paradigm of L2 development have seen focused feedback as superior since it allows learners, especially those of lower proficiency, to readily notice and process the corrective information they receive (Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, 2007). Unfocused feedback might be better suited for written versus oral communication due to “the permanence of written texts,” which allows learners to repeatedly refer to the supplied CF and have the time “to draw upon stored L2 knowledge in their long-term memory and consider it in relation to the information provided in the written CF before hypothesizing the correct L2 form/structure to use” (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p. 4). Advanced learners might be better able to attend to unfocused feedback since their knowledge and practice with L2 are arguably more developed than those of their lower proficiency peers (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). This argument finds support in a sociocultural perspective in that a more self-regulated learner (i.e., one that requires less scaffolding from a more proficient L2 user) may be better able to deal with CF on a wider range of errors and to readily attend to indirect feedback strategies (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Still, CF treatment from this perspective needs to meet the needs of individual learners, providing them with as much or as little feedback on as many or as few structures as they deem necessary. Research comparing the effectiveness of focused versus unfocused CF has been limited to a handful of studies that together cannot yet ascertain advantages of one CF approach over another (Ellis et al., 2008; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Sheen et al., 2009). For example, while Ellis et al. (2008) and Frear and Chiu (2015) found no differences in accuracy gains between focused and unfocused groups, Sheen et al. (2009) and Kang and Han (2015) revealed advantages for focused WCF provision.

Research has recently suggested a role for such factors as instructional context, task type, and learner differences in mediating the effectiveness of WCF. Kang and Han (2015), for example, showed that learners in L2
settings benefitted from WCF more than their foreign-language (FL) counterparts. This is because L2 settings, especially EAP classes, prioritize the development of writing skills, which might be of a lesser concern in FL settings (Ferris, 2010). The type of writing task can also affect the impact of CF, as essays/compositions and narratives may be more susceptible to feedback than journal writing (Kang & Han, 2015). Finally, various individual differences may determine whether or not learners attend to provided WCF. Bitchener (2017) argued that learner-internal variables of working memory, processing capacity, and language-learning aptitude can, individually or collaboratively, affect cognitive processing of WCF. Similarly, a motivated learner is likely to engage with feedback, as is the learner with positive attitudes “to language learning in general, to target language communities, to the learning of a particular language, to a focus on form and/or meaning, and to written CF and particular types of written CF” (Bitchener, 2017, p. 136).

Teachers’ WCF Practices

Despite the ample knowledge on WCF effectiveness, “much less research . . . has investigated how teachers respond to their students’ writing and what justifies their pedagogical choices” (Guénette & Lyster, 2013, p. 130). The investigations that have addressed L2 teachers’ corrective practices have primarily juxtaposed teachers’ beliefs about WCF with their in-class actions (e.g., Ferris, 2014; Guénette & Lyster, 2013; Junqueira & Payant, 2015; Lee, 2009). Guénette and Lyster (2013), for example, examined the WCF beliefs that 18 preservice L2 teachers held and whether the teachers acted on these beliefs when providing feedback to high school ESL learners. Most teachers preferred to selectively focus on learners’ errors that they addressed with direct CF or a combination of direct and indirect types. While these beliefs were confirmed in practice, the teachers reported struggling with a fear of incorrectly diagnosing an error, overwhelming the students with too much feedback, knowing how to adapt feedback to learners’ proficiency levels, and managing time constraints.

when providing WCF. Similar concerns were reported by Junqueira and Payant (2015), who investigated the WCF beliefs and practices of a graduate student teaching university-level ESL courses. This teacher’s beliefs and practices, however, were inconsistent. Although she believed in addressing global issues before addressing local issues, the teacher prioritized feedback to local over global issues. She also preferred using direct feedback with explanation to help learners understand errors but, in practice, supplied comprehensive feedback without explanation.

WCF beliefs-practices inconsistencies have also been documented with in-service teachers. Although the university writing teachers in Ferris (2014) saw it necessary to supply feedback to both content and language, they provided less feedback to stronger learners; when they did, the focus was on surface-level concerns. While some teachers claimed to prefer the use of questions (indirect feedback), in reality, direct feedback in the form of statements and imperatives dominated. Similarly, the English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Lee (2009) believed that WCF should focus on both content and accuracy, but attention to language form dominated their feedback. The teachers also preferred to focus on select errors indirectly; yet, in practice, they used direct feedback to treat errors comprehensively. The teachers in a Saudi-university context (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014), in line with their institution’s expectations, provided comprehensive feedback using prescribed indirect techniques, albeit they believed that students’ proficiency should determine the type of WCF supplied (i.e., direct feedback for lower proficiency learners and indirect feedback for more advanced learners). However, there is evidence that CF-focused training—which combines opportunities for both preservice and in-service teachers to engage with research, apply findings in practice, and reflect on the experience and resulting knowledge—can positively amend teachers’ views about feedback (e.g., Busch, 2010; Li, 2017; Vásquez & Harvey, 2010).

These findings have been communicated by researchers, not the actual teacher-participants. Yet, examining one’s own corrective practices
can yield new understandings of teacher practices and thought processes, sustaining a practitioner’s development in the long term. Delante, an English-learning advisor and teacher at a university in Singapore, examined the written feedback he provided and its effects (2017). Although his feedback addressed issues of both form and content, he focused on form more and prioritized direct feedback. By reflecting on his practice, Delante identified factors related to his instructional context, himself as a teacher, and his students as the reasons for his WCF choices, and he outlined strategies to mitigate these factors’ effects. Examinations such as this are rare, especially with preservice teachers. By having four graduate students engage in a duoethnography to relay firsthand the processes they undergo in understanding their feedback practices and the reasons for them, this study aims to highlight how preservice teachers engage with WCF and what pedagogical issues they face in the process. To reflect the personal nature of this duoethnography, the analysis is reported using the first-person plural “we” since the teacher-educator considers herself an active participant in the professional development that occurred.

Method

This study was conducted with four Canadian MA candidates (3 males and 1 female; mean age 35) attending a graduate seminar on pedagogical grammar taught by the teacher-educator. The graduate students were in the 2nd year of a 2-year program and had already completed courses (taught by other instructors) in L2 methodology, L2 acquisition, and a required 60-hour teaching practicum; two students reported additional teaching experience, which was outside of the L2 field. While three participants reported English as their L1, Chinese was the native language of the fourth student; however, his English proficiency was high. The teacher-educator designed the graduate seminar to (a) focus on pedagogical descriptions of English grammar, (b) have students critically evaluate theories and empirical work related to the teaching of grammar, and (c) explore methodological approaches and techniques for developing/
enhancing learners’ grammatical knowledge. As part of the course, the students empirically investigated their attitudes about and practices with CF as they each tutored an L2 learner enrolled in a 13-week EAP course at the same university. The EAP course was the second in a three-level program, which, in line with the curriculum in place, indicates intermediate proficiency (i.e., each learner obtained a score of at least 5.5/9.0 on the IELTS [International English Language Testing System] test) and emphasizes the level-appropriate development of general academic skills, language forms, and study tasks. The EAP students were to write a two-page literature review to add to a research report on the teacher-prescribed topic of addiction.

For the assignment, the graduate students tutored EAP learners (who came from China, Japan, Senegal, and Syria) one-on-one to (a) determine tutees’ views, needs, and expectations about grammar and CF; (b) provide CF on the tutees’ EAP assignment; (c) interview tutees about their understanding of the feedback provided; and (e) have tutees rewrite the essay, incorporating tutors’ suggestions. Then, the tutors reflected on the project, analyzing the choices they made while completing the four steps and how these choices affected their WCF attitudes and resulting practices. These reflections were later orally discussed by the tutors and the teacher-educator to compare individual findings with those of the group. Before the students commenced the assignment, the teacher-educator instructed the students on CF and WCF, assigned key readings on the topic, and led class discussions on the topic. Throughout the project, the teacher-educator provided detailed instructions, reflection guidance, PowerPoint slides, time in class, and additional ad hoc assistance.

The teacher-educator structured the assignment to align with available WCF research and pedagogical advice. As Table 1 shows, the tutors met with the tutees three times (1 hour each time), with each meeting serving a specific purpose. The goals for the first meeting were to interview the tutee about his or her views, needs, and expectations about grammar and CF and to collect their writing for feedback. Learning about tutees’ views...
Table 1

*Assignment Structure and Rationale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Tutor: Interview tutee about their views, needs, and expectations about grammar and CF; collect writing for feedback</td>
<td>Meet tutor one-on-one to answer questions; provide the assigned writing for feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutee: Meet tutor one-on-one to answer questions; provide the assigned writing for feedback</td>
<td>Tutor: Meet tutor one-on-one to answer questions; provide the assigned writing for feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver the corrected essay and discuss what tutee understood from the feedback; seek/provide clarifications as necessary and ask tutee to rewrite the essay, incorporating the WCF provided</td>
<td>Meet tutor to review the WCF provided and ask any questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutor: Meet tutor to review the WCF provided and ask any questions</td>
<td>Tutee: Meet tutor to review the WCF provided and ask any questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Tutor: Compare tutee’s revised draft with the original to determine which corrections were incorporated (or not) and seek answers for the choices made; suggest ways for tutee to continue to improve their writing</td>
<td>Meet tutor to review differences between initial and revised drafts, explain choices made, and ask additional questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutee: Meet tutor to review differences between initial and revised drafts, explain choices made, and ask additional questions</td>
<td>Tutor: Meet tutor to review differences between initial and revised drafts, explain choices made, and ask additional questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Tutor: Allow tutees to explain their decisions to incorporate the provided WCF, and identify any challenges in understanding the feedback</td>
<td>Tutee: Allow tutees to explain their decisions to incorporate the provided WCF, and identify any challenges in understanding the feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

on feedback, past experiences with it, and preferences for it is supported by research that has found that learners’ beliefs about feedback mediate the noticeability and effectiveness of CF (e.g., Kartchava & Ammar, 2014; Li, 2010). This information may help teachers tailor the feedback they deliver to the (changing) needs of one or many learners at various points of their L2 development (e.g., Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Having teachers compare their CF beliefs with those of their students may ascertain the extent to and areas in which their CF perceptions differ. Research has shown that teacher and learner beliefs about CF diverge, with learners wanting more attention to error than teachers are willing to supply (e.g., Jean & Simard, 2011; Li, 2017). Teachers’ CF actions, however, can depend on the length of their teaching experience and their experience with feedback. Experienced teachers provide more CF and use a greater variety of corrective strategies than their less experienced counterparts (e.g., Junqueira & Kim, 2013; Rahimi & Zhang, 2015), who tend to draw on their language-learning experiences to inform their general (e.g., Borg, 2006, 2018) and CF-specific (e.g., Kartchava et al., 2020; Junqueira & Kim, 2013) behaviors.

In the second meeting, held a week later, the tutors delivered the corrected essay in person to determine what the tutees could understand from the feedback on their own and to provide clarifications. The session, a form of oral conferencing, allowed the learners to review and discuss their writing and the provided feedback individually with a tutor. Such opportunities are well-received by learners who prefer to orally discuss their errors with the teacher in lieu of receiving a marked-up essay, the errors in which they are to decipher on their own (Nassaji, 2017). When learners negotiate provided CF, they are more likely to revise as well as address more errors in terms of degree and type (Sze, 2002; Williams, 2004). The resulting corrections are also more successful and remedied more quickly in subsequent oral conferences (Nassaji, 2007). The individualized format of oral conferences is conducive to providing learners with developmentally appropriate feedback and time to process it; such
sessions can help teachers understand the cause of particular errors (as articulated by a learner) and select suitable CF types with which to address them (Nassaji, 2011).

For the third meeting, held 2 weeks after the second, the tutees compared the revised draft with the original one, explaining the corrections they chose to incorporate (or not). The tutors assessed the students’ effort holistically, answered questions, and suggested ways to improve their writing skills further. This was done to determine how engaged the tutees were with the supplied WCF and to identify obstacles in their understanding of the corrections. Having tutees describe what they think a correction means or the type of error it targets may help teachers determine “how and why learners respond to, process and use the feedback they are given” (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p. 63) as well as identify specific challenges a learner may be facing in attending to the feedback (Bitchener, 2017). This may also help teachers reevaluate the effectiveness of their CF practices going forward (Delante, 2017).

The written reports and group interview notes were analyzed holistically to identify general themes in our responses, the intended meaning of which were verified through a members’ check, which ensures that the data gathered match what the participants mean to convey (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the results of duoethnographies are generally reported dialogically, the traditionally written duoethnographies have adopted a more mainstream format (R. Lowe, personal communication, July 24, 2020), which we employed here.

**Results and Discussion**

In this study, we explored the choices we made in providing WCF to student writing and the effects of these decisions on our immediate and future interactions with L2 writers (see Table 2 for a summary). Our analysis revealed five themes (expectations, feedback scope, feedback type, time commitment, and complexity of WCF) that guided our thoughts about and provision of feedback. Before embarking on the project, we had
all experienced receiving feedback in our own language learning and saw its provision as important; however, we were not sure about “best practices” in feedback provision, and we worried about providing corrections that maintained a balance between being effective and, at the same time, being mindful of the learners’ feelings and expectations.

**Expectations**

*Julian:* Based on my experiences, I have come to question *writing* as a whole. EAP at [this university] assumes that writing is a universal skill based on how it is employed in a content-based fashion, i.e., students are given a thematic unit to work on throughout the term. . . . Since the classes are so general, while it may not be intended, the pedagogical assumption here [is] that writing is a general set of formative language skills. However, there is so much more. The ideas of being able to think critically and synthesize information are expected to be shown by the students’ writing, but I imagine that the concepts themselves are often not explained clearly . . . as students often struggle with these broader, more academic concepts. . . . When I even use the term *writing,* I think more of the ability to write grammatically associated sentences to send across meaning from one interlocutor to another in a common and understandable fashion. I feel that the broader pragmatic context is more justifiably associated with the term that we know as *composition,* which has been taught through product, process, and socio-rhetorical approaches.

Before meeting the tutees, we discussed the idea of what *writing* meant to us and the assignment the tutees were working on. We also considered how to best respond to the assignment’s topic, writing genre, and possible errors. The tension demonstrated in Julian’s excerpt stems from the writing-to-learn/learning-to-write dichotomy (Manchón, 2011) that, for a long time, had L2 teachers use L1 instructional approaches that emphasized process-to-product writing, redefining language teachers as L1 writing instructors (Leki, 2000) and leading to the near abandonment of
WCF. In terms of the genre of the tutees’ assignment, we too had once had to learn how to write a literature review, and having produced several of them, we could empathize with the struggles the EAP learners were likely encountering (see Beaufort, 2007; and Tardy, 2011 for an overview of the challenges in learning to write in a discipline). Much like the EAP learners we tutored, we did not have any control over the topic or the assignment they were working on, but we planned to offer the tutees as much support in the process as possible, ensuring that their writer voices came through in a clear and grammatically accurate way. It was important to us to adopt a supportive stance toward their ideas and language differences (Horner et al., 2011) as we tried to see the learners as language resources, not challenges (Zawacki et al., 2007, cited in Zawacki & Habib, 2014). Still, we realized that accuracy in writing is of great importance to academic and professional audiences and that in order for L2 learners to “write like an insider” (Zawacki & Habib, 2014, p. 188), they would need to learn the various genres and discourse conventions of the academe by engaging in relevant writing and research processes as well as addressing issues of form. Many of our expectations were rooted in our experiences as language learners, which, in line with previous research on teacher cognition, is to be expected of new (e.g., Borg, 2006; Kartchava et al., 2020) and even more seasoned professionals (e.g., Junqueira & Kim, 2013). Given our own experiences in learning to write in an L2 and the learning outcomes for the EAP course established by the program, we expected the learners to struggle primarily with issues of genre, grammar, and lexis, and in terms of the task, we thought that issues in verb forms, sentence structure, and word choice were likely to prevail.

Feedback Scope

*Yushi:* [The tutee] confirmed that she received CF from instructors in previous ESL programs but normally just on her written work. She believed that feedback was helpful and that it helped her check and correct any grammar issues that she had trouble with. In this
specific assignment, she asked me to look at her work as a whole and correct it as much as possible.

**Judy:** [The tutee] requested that her grammar be corrected and asked for “many red marks to mark her mistakes,” mentioning word choice, word order, vocabulary, and the need for academic English. Later, she listed connecting words, paraphrasing, and citation formatting as areas that required extra focus. She was unaware of any error patterns and simply requested, “Tell me everything I do wrong.” She stated that she preferred written feedback because she could refer back to it and did not have to depend on her memory.

**Abdizalon:** Overall, [the tutee] saw CF to be helpful and wanted to be corrected often on his use of English. Moreover, he highlighted that when it came to receiving CF, he expected to be corrected on all aspects of his writing, both at the sentence and discourse level.

After meeting with the tutees for the first time, it became abundantly clear that although they all had had some experience with WCF and welcomed it, they could not identify problem areas they wanted us to focus on in our feedback. Instead, they asked for “all errors” to be addressed. Not having enough information to draw on, we found ourselves struggling to decide how to approach the task. The instructional setting and the prescribed task type were conducive to feedback provision (Ferris, 2010; Kang & Han, 2015), but we did not know the scope that our feedback should take. Given that our tutees leaned toward a comprehensive focus and that WCF research has not yet reached a consensus on whether focused feedback is more effective than unfocused feedback, we decided to address all the errors (in structure and language) we could find in the tutees’ initial writing. This, sadly, proved to be a disappointing choice, for when we presented the tutees with feedback, they appeared overwhelmed, lamenting “too much correction” and feeling unable to address it all. A lack of clear focus in the feedback probably yielded cognitive and informational overload, making the task of responding to the feedback appear
unbearable to the tutees (Bitchener, 2008). Furthermore, since the main focus of the feedback was primarily on grammatical and lexical errors, it likely confused and discouraged the learners, who often could not explain the errors or find ways to remedy them on their own (Lee, 2019).

However, the oral conference allowed us the time to explain some of the errors and to reassure the learners that they were good writers despite the errors identified. This assurance was important since unfocused feedback can negatively affect learner motivation to write in an L2 (Lee et al., 2018). The conference also helped us develop a more informed understanding of the causes for the tutees’ errors (Nassaji, 2011); one of these causes was their lower proficiency. In retrospect, focused WCF would probably have been more helpful to these intermediate-proficiency tutees since lower proficiency learners are better able to notice and attend to fewer errors (Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, 2007), which may translate into learners’ willingness to engage with a teacher’s feedback (Zheng & Yu, 2018) and more successful revisions. However, emotions (surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, etc.) that learners feel at the sight of WCF can impact the extent to which they choose to engage with and uptake feedback. Mahfoodh (2017) found that when EFL university learners accepted feedback, they revised successfully 95.2% of the time. Although our tutees appeared disappointed with the amount of feedback offered, they appreciated the oral conference and felt reassured to revise their writing. Interestingly, Mahfoodh’s study showed that it is not always the positive emotions about feedback that lead to revisions; dissatisfaction and frustration can result in successful revisions as well.

Feedback Type

Abdizalon: I utilized a mix of both direct and indirect options. Specifically, I used four different WCF techniques: underlining errors without explanation, underlining while highlighting error type, underlining with metalinguistic/rule explanation, and direct correction. The first type provided a more implicit indirect CF and was used for
errors where the student was deemed able to identify and correct the error on his own. The second CF type was used when the student was perceived to be familiar with the form—although had not fully mastered its use—requiring some assistance. The third CF type was more explicit and was provided for complex errors and register-specific rules [i.e., referencing]. The fourth CF type was provided where the student was deemed unable to self-correct the error. I hoped the first three types would help build the student’s self-editing strategies in different ways, and . . . the fourth CF technique would supplement the three in improving the writing.

*Judy:* I decided to utilize a “judicious” combination of both direct and indirect correction. The direct correction consisted of cross-outs, rewrites, and additions. Indirect correction was used when obvious patterns of errors were detected. A simple visual cue was used to identify the pattern (rectangle around word usage errors, circle around the incorrect use of *are* with an additional triangle when the problem was noun/verb agreement).

*Yushi:* I used two major feedback techniques on her paper: direct correction [DC] and indirect correction. I used a lot of DC to correct her paper, such as cross-out[s], rewrites, and additions. I also provided some indirect corrections in the form of codes.

For lower level learners, the type of CF instructors use could prove the deciding factor in how much WCF is successfully modified since “direct correction is best for producing accurate revisions, and students prefer it because it is the fastest and easiest way for them as well as the fastest way for teachers over several drafts” (Chandler, 2003, p. 267). Indirect feedback, in turn, could be more challenging for less proficient learners to respond to since they lack the necessary knowledge and resources. Although our tutees had experience with feedback and preferred direct WCF to the indirect type, we opted to use both: direct feedback for editing surface errors and indirect feedback for raising tutees’ awareness to the errors and promoting
the use of their L2 knowledge to self-correct. The tutees successfully revised all the errors highlighted with direct CF but struggled to deal with the indirect type—when they encountered indirect feedback, they often had to consult with their tutors for more explanation and support. This reaction is expected given their proficiency level and extant research on the superiority of direct feedback in yielding accurate revisions (e.g., Bitchener, 2012). Still, we wanted to challenge the tutees with indirect feedback to “help [them] become independent writers capable of self-editing” (Lee, 2019, p. 525). We found that mixing the WCF types was especially helpful when tutees could not understand or act on indirect clues in the feedback. For example, one tutor, focusing on the paper’s content, advised his tutee to narrow down his topic. Initially, the tutee nodded and appeared to understand the request, but when the revised draft was unchanged in this regard, Julian, his tutor, explained the meaning of the feedback and suggested ways to address it. This explanation brought on excitement from the tutee and willingness to attempt another revision. Hence, less proficient writers can benefit from indirect feedback that they understand and know how to act on.

**Time Commitment**

*Abdizalon:* The effort I put into providing CF to [my tutee] in this project and the use of a full meeting to provide WCF may be luxuries not possible in a real-world context [that] involves limitations such as time constraints, [an] increased number of students, external objectives, etc. These factors restrict opportunities to arrange lengthy one-on-one meetings with the students as well as opportunities to provide significant CF to each student on individual errors.

*Judy:* After witnessing the power of direct CF, one wonders at its usefulness for the overall goal of assisting L2 writers to learn strategies to improve their writing. Simply editing the student’s writing seems counterproductive. This suggests that the treatment of the students’ drafts requires something other than a simple “proofread” and that perhaps there should be a series of tasks at the level of metalanguage.
to help students appreciate indirect CF and develop their own editing skills.

The graduate students’ concern about the commitment of time and effort that WCF provision requires is echoed throughout the research on writing, since new and experienced teachers alike spend inordinate amounts of time correcting learners’ writing (e.g., Guénette & Lyster, 2013; Junqueira & Payant, 2015; Lee, 2008, 2019). To lighten the burden, some teachers may amend the amount or quality of supplied feedback. For example, the preservice teacher in Junqueira and Payant (2015) forewent providing explanations to 80.6% of local errors, likely to cope with the time pressure she was under. Similarly, preservice teachers in Guénette and Lyster (2013) supplied direct feedback to save time. Delante (2017) noted a negative change of tone in his comments when he was flooded with assignments to provide feedback on. Time constraints may yield inaccurate feedback, which may prove more harmful than helpful (Ferris, 1999; Lee, 2004). However, it is important, as Judy said, to question the role of the teacher in the learning process. After all, teachers should not be “simply marking machines . . . that repeat the same tedious job mechanically, day in and day out” (Lee, 2019, p. 525) but should provide learners with opportunities to self-edit their work and benefit from indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Complexity of WCF

Abdizalon: [This assignment allowed me] to see, firsthand, the many theoretical, practical, and contextual factors involved in providing CF and the difficulty of balancing them effectively. Some of the challenges I experienced would not have been considered had it not been for this eye-opening experience, some of which I hope to account for more effectively in the future.

Yushi: The takeaway message that I got from this project is that CF is complex. Having been able to work with a real student allowed me
a perfect opportunity to put the theories I learned in the course into practice. We also need to consider learners’ differences and beliefs, accommodation for which should be a priority for teachers.

We found the project an illuminating experience that allowed us to appreciate the complexity of WCF and the many factors that impact its effectiveness. While some of our choices made intuitive sense to us and were reflective of the kind of experiences and instruction we had received as language learners, they were not always effective for the learners we worked with. This knowledge makes it important to consider learner differences and amend our feedback accordingly (Bitchener, 2017). While the effectiveness of the various WCF types is contingent on learners’ proficiency, the maturity level teachers assign to learners may affect the CF type chosen. Delante (2017) used indirect feedback with learners he perceived as “mature,” which he defined as having the ability to think and work independently. We are aware that although learners can play an active role in providing feedback to each other, which may alleviate the time-commitment concerns we endured, learners may need training to be effective (e.g., Sato & Lyster, 2012; Tigchelaar & Polio, 2017); however, we did not have a chance to test this in practice. Having interacted with CF research, we plan to be vigilant in applying the advice given to practitioners, as it may not always be supported by extant evidence (e.g., Ellis, 2017; Tigchelaar & Polio, 2017). Finally, similar to the preservice teacher in Junqueira and Payant (2015), we realize that additional practice with WCF, both in individual and group settings, may improve our comfort level with and understanding of feedback provision. The findings from this study give the teacher-educator evidence-based ideas on ways to amend this project in the future.
Table 2

**Summary of Choices Made and Their Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Choices made</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Provide WCF (as it is important to L2 development) but respect tutees’ writing styles</td>
<td>Struggled to balance tutees’ expectations/needs with the extant WCF theoretical and empirical evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expect issues with grammar (i.e., verb forms, sentence structure, and word choice) and lexis</td>
<td>Confused tutees, who could not easily explain the errors (which were primarily focused on grammar and lexis) or remedy them independently; oral conferences addressed some of these concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback scope</td>
<td>Supply WCF on all errors (i.e., comprehensive approach)</td>
<td>Overwhelmed tutees with too much correction and inability to address the CF supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback types</td>
<td>Use direct feedback to address surface errors and indirect feedback to help tutees notice their errors and promote self-correction</td>
<td>Enabled tutees to successfully revise all errors marked using direct feedback, but tutees struggled with errors highlighted using indirect WCF types, and they required additional explanation/support to address the issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time commitment</td>
<td>Allocate a significant amount of time to WCF provision</td>
<td>Dedicated extensive effort and time providing feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of WCF</td>
<td>Were unsure of how to approach the task of WCF provision and what to expect</td>
<td>Learned that many factors impact the effectiveness of feedback provision, including learner differences, contextual factors, task type, and WCF training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Both the project we undertook in the pedagogical grammar seminar and our collaboration with the teacher-educator allowed us to reflect on and critically examine our understanding of and practice with WCF. Most importantly, this project made us aware of the attitudes we brought to the task and identified factors that affected our practice. Relying on our past experiences as language learners, we thought feedback was important, but we struggled to supply it in a manner that would balance our tutees’ expectations and needs with the WCF theoretical and empirical evidence we learned about. We also became keenly aware that feedback is a complex phenomenon and there is no one answer on how to apply it in practice. Task design, instructional setting, and learner differences impact teachers’ decisions on what errors to correct, how many of them to address, and what techniques to use. Even after implementing these decisions in practice, there is no guarantee that learners will revise their initial drafts since a myriad of factors, including lack of understanding and emotional predisposition or response to CF, may affect the actions they choose to take. To understand and possibly predict learner behavior with feedback, oral conferences with the teacher might be useful, as was the case here, since such interactions can help teachers interpret the reason(s) for an error and help learners recognize the need to incorporate the supplied correction (Nassaji, 2017). Such sessions can also help teachers fine-tune their feedback to the needs and proficiencies of individual learners or groups (Nassaji, 2011). Although oral conferences can add to a teacher’s already extensive time commitment, the information these conferences yield may lessen the occurrence of misunderstood or inaccurate teacher feedback and help teachers provide assistance in line with learners’ evolving needs. Trained peers could also engage in feedback provision, a process that may not only help teachers manage their time and effort but also increase learners’ attention to form and further their L2 development (e.g., Sato & Lyster, 2012).

This project represents a form of teacher training that combines theory with an experiential component of providing L2 learners with WCF. While academic articles made us aware of the theoretical and practical aspects involved in feedback provision, working with tutees helped us experience these aspects and identify other issues involved. Reading alone would not have yielded the same results (e.g., Kamiya & Loewen, 2014) since developing expertise requires topic-targeted and extensive training that also includes reflection on performance (Tsui, 2005). The few studies that have engaged preservice teachers in learning opportunities that combined theory and practice have helped these teachers to appreciate the importance of errors and understand when and how to supply feedback (Busch, 2010), diminish their concerns about its negative effects (Vásquez & Harvey, 2010), and realize the role of timing in CF provision (Kartchava et al., 2020).

Using duoethnography to explore our understanding of the topic has guided our evolving interpretations and discussions of WCF while promoting open reflection and allowing us to equally consider the various elements that participants reported as important at various stages in the process. Still, because duoethnographies are highly context and individual specific, their results cannot be generalized; they can, however, offer insights on similar experiences to be undertaken by interested others. This study has detailed a way to involve preservice teachers in learning about, engaging with, and reflecting on WCF provision, ensuring that such opportunities yield introspective and autonomous future L2 teachers.
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Learning-to-write and writing-to-learn in an additional language (pp. 3–14). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.31


Professors’ Views of Content Transformation in Students’ Paraphrasing

Ling Shi
University of British Columbia

Abstract: This study explores how paraphrasing transforms and integrates meaning from reading into writing. Findings are based on interviews with 27 professors who commented on 8 paraphrases written by graduate students. Both student writers and professors were selected from across cultural (Chinese and North American) and disciplinary (soft and hard) contexts. Results indicate that the participating professors tended to accept paraphrases that involved a selection or interpretation of the original source that accurately represented the source text, rather than those that contained a misunderstanding or additional ideas. The professors also suggested that students could add an explanation for the content transformation so the paraphrase would be transparent for readers. The study highlights how important it is for student paraphrasers to provide guidance for readers so they can follow student content transformations. It also suggests that paraphrasing should be taught explicitly at the graduate level by responding to students’ writing while it is in process.

Keywords: discourse synthesis, paraphrasing, citation, graduate writing, professors’ assessment

Writers paraphrase source texts to cue readers to relevant textual or content development within a paper. Paraphrasing is an important academic writing skill in discourse synthesis (Spivey, 1984, 1990, 1997), whereby the writer composes by reading and drawing on multiple source texts. In other words, to paraphrase is to transform or recontextualize a source text. Many paraphrases may involve “explicitly expressed meanings, or something only implicit or implied in the original text” (Linell, 1998, p. 148). Since a paraphrase demonstrates how the individual writer understands and uses a source text to develop content for a particular writing task, a source text might be paraphrased with different content transformations by individual writers. The question is then whether certain types of content transformations are more or less acceptable from the perspective of readers. The key question, as Howard et al. (2010) pointed out, is whether and how students represent what is in the source.

Since graduate writing is dependent on working with others’ ideas and texts to construct knowledge, professors need to affirm students’ practices for transforming content when paraphrasing (Madden, 2020). To explore how a paraphrased text in student writing can be seen or accepted by professors as a process of content transformation in discourse synthesis, this study is based on interviews with professors in North American (\(n = 14\)) and Chinese universities (\(n = 13\)) who evaluated eight paraphrases written by graduate students in both Chinese and North American universities. To contextualize the study, the next section will review the theory and research on content transformation in paraphrasing and how such intellectual work plays an important role in discourse synthesis.

**Content Transformation in Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing is “recontextualizing source information in one’s own writing with a credit to the original author” (Shi et al., 2018, p. 31). A paraphrase differs from a direct quotation by rewording the original text. It also differs from a summary, which can be written to capture the main points of the whole article or book. However, the distinction can be blurred as a
summary relies on paraphrases (Keck, 2006) and a paraphrase can contain a quotation fragment (shorter than a T-unit; Petrić, 2012).

There is an obvious link between effective paraphrasing and discourse synthesis, a constructivist model proposed by Spivey (1984, 1990, 1997), which portrays how writers integrate information into their writing from multiple source texts. From a constructivist perspective, writers are constructive agents of texts as meaning. Like the reader who builds meaning by comprehending and interpreting texts, the writer completing a hybrid task of reading to write goes beyond the given source information to construct new meaning. In other words, source-based writing is to connect meaning constructed from the source text with one’s prior academic knowledge to make the content work for the present writing task. Such a transformation or synthesis of a source text manifests intertextuality in academic writing.

Since the writer approaches readings of source texts to construct meaning, discourse synthesis, as Spivey (1984, 1990, 1997) proposes, involves three constructive acts or transformations: selecting, organizing, and connecting. Selecting refers to how the writer selects source information as cues to shape meaning in their writing. The textual relevance of selected information is closely related to the meaning being constructed in the new text. To organize the selected information, the writer then performs organizing by constructing a unique written textual structure. During the process, the writer also performs connecting by filling in the gaps of information using their prior knowledge. Spivey (1997) calls such intertextual connections “intertext” (p. 135). Together, the textual transformations of selecting, organizing, and connecting illustrate a dynamic process of appropriating source texts into a new textual tapestry as writers “dismantle sources and reconfigure content” (Spivey, 1990, p. 260). The three operations are related, intertwined, and overlapping. Originality or knowledge “come[s] through synthesis as new connections and possibilities” (Spivey, 1997, p. 242).

If discourse synthesis is to select, connect, and organize source information, paraphrasing is a significant citation practice for merging reading and writing into a selective, interpretative, and generative process of meaning making. Parallel to a synthesizer, who organizes and makes connections to selected source information, a paraphraser restructures a source text using the strategies of selecting, extending, elaborating, and adding. In a sense, paraphrasing is a window to how discourse synthesis works at a local or sentence level (i.e., as a microprocess or miniature version of discourse synthesis).

When parts of discourse are paraphrased and relocated through recontextualization, according to Linell (1998), they are subject to not only textual change but also meaning transformation “involving shifts of meaning and new perspectives, the accentuation of some semantic aspects, . . . [and] the attenuation or total elimination of others” (p. 148). Meaning is created in the new context because, as Spivey (1997) put it, “texts are read by different people in different contexts, and means of ordering change because they, too, are constructs” (p. 120). Based on her observation of how an expert writer recontextualized source texts to create new meaning through citing or paraphrasing others, Li (2015) pointed out that failure to recontextualize meant a lack of engagement with the source texts, which would lead to inappropriate or transgressive intertextuality.

While exploring students’ strategies of paraphrasing, researchers have noted how writers select source texts (Keck, 2014), patch write from individual source sentences by “reproducing source language with some words deleted or added, some grammatical structures altered, or some synonyms used” (Howard et al., 2010, p. 181), restructure source information (e.g., Sun & Yang, 2015), and add ideas not explicitly stated in the original text (Keck, 2010). An examination of good paraphrasing has also highlighted the writer’s ability to transform knowledge based on inferential thinking (Yamada, 2003) and level of content knowledge (Shi, 2012). Researchers have observed that undergraduates and novice writers mostly practice paraphrasing by focusing on linguistic modifications (rewording
and rearranging syntax), and thus, as Hirvela and Du (2013) noted, these writers view paraphrasing as a strategy for knowledge telling rather than a recontextualization of the paraphrased text with one’s own voice. Many student writers also hesitate when paraphrasing to voice their own interpretation or authorial intention for fear of falsifying the original meaning (e.g., Sun, 2009).

Two recent studies have examined how student writers paraphrased by selecting, restructuring, and integrating the source texts into their own writing. Shi et al. (2018) analyzed 192 paraphrases identified by 18 graduate students in their writing at a North American university. Based on the participants’ comments in text-based interviews, during which students talked and reflected on their paraphrasing, the majority of the paraphrases were identified as syntactically restructured, and many contained content recontextualizations. Students in hard disciplines commented more on how they used interpretations, whereas students in soft disciplines commented more on how they selected information. Participants across disciplines also commented on how they added their own ideas. For example, one student paraphrased a tentative claim in a source text about a clinical debate (“It could have been . . .”) by making the claim assertive (“It has been theorized that . . .”) to add her own view, based on her own readings of literature (pp. 40–41). In another study, Shi and Dong (2018) explored content recontextualization (selecting, interpreting, adding/extending ideas) by analyzing text-based interviews focusing on 117 paraphrases of 17 Chinese graduate students in Chinese (n = 66) and English (n = 51) writing. Compared with English paraphrases, which mostly featured the selecting of original information, the Chinese paraphrases contained more instances of interpreting and extending original ideas. This result indicates the important role of language proficiency, as Chinese students appeared more confident in paraphrasing based on their comprehension and interpretation of source texts in their first language. These findings suggest that paraphrasing not only requires similar reasoning operations to discourse synthesis but also

might be influenced by writers’ language and disciplinary background as they recontextualize source information.

The Present Study

The literature review suggests that paraphrasing is a constructive act in discourse synthesis in which writers create new texts through the content transformations of selecting, organizing, and adding. Research is needed to explore how professors perceive and evaluate the relevant students’ performances in order to find out how explicit writing instruction on paraphrasing should be provided to graduate students. As Micciche and Carr (2011) stated, it is crucial that students receive guidance about how to position themselves in relation to other writers in the process of writing. In addition, research should verify the possible influence of professors’ and students’ language (Shi & Dong, 2018) and disciplinary background (Shi et al., 2018) on how source information is recontextualized. To fill in these gaps, this study examines students’ paraphrasing with the following research question:

- How do Chinese and North American professors perceive graduate students’ content transformation in paraphrasing?

Method

Participating Professors

A total of 27 faculty members (11 full, 11 associate, and five assistant professors) participated in the interviews. Of these professors, 14 (eight in Arts and Social Sciences, and six in Applied Sciences and Science) were from a North American university, and 13 (eight in Arts and Social Sciences, and five in Applied Sciences and Science) were from several Chinese universities. All the Chinese professors were native speakers of Chinese, whereas the North American professors were native speakers of English, with the exception of two professors who were bilingual in

English and Chinese. The North American participants were volunteers who responded to an email invitation sent to a randomly selected list of faculty. Contact information for these faculty was taken from university websites. The same procedure was used to recruit Chinese professors in one university in mainland China. However, only six professors volunteered, so the six participants were asked to recommend other professors (snowball sampling). As a result, another seven Chinese professors from four other universities were recruited. Participants (Table 1) are assigned a pseudonym with the first letter indicating their area of expertise (e.g., E = Education, A = Arts, S = Science or Applied Science).

**Students’ Paraphrases**

Eight paraphrases (Appendix A) were selected from paraphrases collected for a large study in which participating graduate students across disciplines in a North American and a Chinese university were invited to identify paraphrases in their writing and comment on how they performed content transformations. The paraphrases from the student writing were numbered for random selection. A total of 14 paraphrases were initially selected and then a further selection was made so that the selected paraphrases were written by different students, with a balance between Chinese and English paraphrases. Of the eight paraphrases selected, four were written in English by students in North America and four were written in Chinese by students in mainland China. Compared with the Chinese-language writers, who were all Chinese native speakers, one English-language writer was a native speaker and the other three were advanced second-language (L2) writers (one obtained an undergraduate degree in a Canadian university, and the other two had high TOEFL scores [over 100] when they were admitted to the participating university). To protect the identity of these student writers, the original author of the cited source text is indicated as “XXX” and footnote numbers from this text have been replaced with “[footnote]” in this paper.

Table 1

Participating Professors’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Professorship</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scot</td>
<td>Applied Science</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>Applied Science</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanika</td>
<td>Applied Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharlene</td>
<td>Applied Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sever</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eadge</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easton</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earwin</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eadlin</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>Associate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Badden</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babby</td>
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<td>40–49</td>
<td>Associate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Applied Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
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<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackinzie</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madge</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paraphrases were written by seven master's students and one PhD student. The four Chinese paraphrases (along with the matching source texts and students’ own comments) were translated into English for the North American professors, and the data of English paraphrases were translated into Chinese for the Chinese professors. However, both the English and the Chinese versions of the data were available for the participants that knew both languages. In fact, two North American professors and most of the Chinese professors read the data in both languages. A research assistant and I translated the texts carefully to make sure that the paraphrases were comparable in the two languages and had the same amount of copying or patchwriting. For example, if the student used a particular set of words from the source text in the paraphrase when writing in Chinese, we would do the same when translating the data into English. For each paraphrase, Table 2 presents the theme, paper topic, and type of writing in which the paraphrase occurred.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to solicit professors’ comments on students’ paraphrasing. Each interview was held in the office of the interviewee and lasted about an hour. The interviews were recorded and conducted in the language (either English or Chinese) the participant preferred. About a week before the interview, the professors were emailed three sets of data: the paraphrases, the matching source texts, and the students’ own comments about how they paraphrased. The participants were told that four paraphrases were originally written in Chinese by students in mainland China and four were written in English by students in North America. The guiding interview question was, “How would you evaluate this paraphrase written by the student?” The professors were asked to comment specifically on (a) whether they found the student’s transformation of content in each paraphrase acceptable and (b) if they had any suggestions for improvement. Although participants were asked to simply comment on the quality of the paraphrases, some participants compared the practices to

Professors’ Views of Content Transformation in Students’ Paraphrasing • 121

Table 2

The Eight Paraphrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of the paraphrase</th>
<th>Topic of the paper</th>
<th>Type of writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Early love</td>
<td>Phenomenon of high school students’ love</td>
<td>Course paper in English education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Development of tourism</td>
<td>The visiting fee of ancient villages</td>
<td>Research paper to prepare for MA research in tourism management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feature extraction</td>
<td>Intelligent flutter detection based on the description of support vectors in number fields</td>
<td>Course paper in mechanical engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication modes</td>
<td>Government public relations from a social media perspective</td>
<td>Course paper in international relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maternal mortality</td>
<td>Maternal and neonatal health</td>
<td>Qualifying paper for PhD research in public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Oral health</td>
<td>Chinese immigrant parents’ beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge in relation to children’s oral health</td>
<td>Course paper in public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Descriptive codes</td>
<td>Results of the 6th Avenue quilting event</td>
<td>Course paper in urban planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Products of sequencing</td>
<td>Next-generation sequencing (NGS) and its individual applications</td>
<td>Course paper in chemistry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

those of their own students. To provide the context of each paraphrase, an abstract of the paper and a couple of sentences before and after the paraphrased text were provided. In addition, hard copies of the student papers were available during the interview in case the professors wanted to check an extended text.

Data Analyses

Participants’ interview comments were transcribed. A research assistant and I first coded 13 of the 27 interviews separately to identify whether the professors found the content transformation in the paraphrases acceptable or not. Of the 108 mentions (13 interviews × 8 paraphrases), we reached an agreement of 82% (89 out of 108). The disagreement revealed that some participants did not comment explicitly on the acceptability of the content transformation but instead commented on inappropriate rewording, the wrong use of citations, too much copying, or patchwriting. Some participants also commented on the need for the writer to explain the transformation and the difficulty in making an assessment because of a lack of content background. To solve the coding discrepancies, a new coding scheme was constructed. I coded all of the data to cover not only comments on whether the content transformation was acceptable or not but also other comments on whether it needed more explanation, was difficult to judge, or contained problems such as inappropriate rewording, problematic citation use, or too much copying or patchwriting (see Appendix B for the coding scheme and examples).

I calculated the frequencies of comments to identify tendencies among participants and whether some paraphrases received more positive or negative comments on content transformations. To compare the comments, I followed Becher’s (1994) categorizations of academic disciplines to assign the participants to hard sciences (including pure hard and applied hard) or soft sciences (including pure soft and applied soft). Summarizing the differences among these disciplines, Neumann et al. (2002) pointed out that pure-hard disciplines (e.g., physics, chemistry) with “a cumulative, atomistic structure, concerned with universals, simplification and a quantitative emphasis” are in contrast with pure-soft disciplines (e.g., arts, history), which are “reiterative, holistic, [and] concerned with particulars and having a qualitative bias” (p. 406). Derived from the hard-pure enquiry are the hard-applied disciplines (e.g., engineering) “concerned with mastery of the physical environment and geared towards products and techniques” (p.
In comparison, the soft-applied disciplines (e.g., education, business) are dependent on soft-pure enquiry and are “concerned with the enhancement of professional practice and aiming to yield protocols and procedures” (p. 406). While Chi-square tests were run in this study to identify significant differences between soft and hard disciplines and between Chinese and North American faculty, likelihood ratios, rather than Pearson Chi-square statistical values, were interpreted and reported because some cells in the present data had expected frequencies smaller than five. In addition, participants’ other comments or suggestions were analyzed to identify how these paraphrases could be improved.

Findings and Discussion

Paraphrases Generating More Positive Mentions

Of the 27 professors’ mentions on the acceptability of the relevant content transformation in the eight paraphrases ($N = 216$), 68 (31%) were deemed acceptable and 95 (44%) were not. The rest (53 [25%]) were not explicit mentions of content transformation because the professor either lacked background knowledge or commented on other aspects of the paraphrase, such as copying or patchwriting, specific rewording, or the use of citations. Table 3 presents the three paraphrases that generated more positive (acceptable) than negative (not acceptable) mentions on content transformation. The paraphrases about the products of sequencing and oral health were both accepted by 18 participants, followed by the paraphrase regarding feature extraction, which was accepted by 14 participants. The paraphrase about the products of sequencing received no negative mentions, though the other two paraphrases received eight negative mentions each. Chi-square tests showed no significant differences in participants’ comments between cultural or disciplinary contexts for the three paraphrases.

The paraphrase about the products of sequencing was written by a North American chemistry student who interpreted the source sentence
Table 3

The Three Paraphrases That Generated More Positive Mentions on Content Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content transformation</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Not acceptable</th>
<th>No explicit mention</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>LR</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpreted “sequencing mechanisms” as main strategies</td>
<td>North A.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.879</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.219</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(67%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products of sequencing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded details of “oral health” to focus on “dental caries”</td>
<td>North A.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>0.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(67%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature extraction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreted “feature extraction” as “vibration processing”</td>
<td>North A.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1.363</td>
<td>0.506</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(52%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

about NGS mechanisms (by synthesis and by ligation) as a description of two main strategies “to detect the products of sequencing reactions.” The student writer considered the source information “a simple concept, so it was very easy to just use my own words . . . [which] shows whether I understand it better.” The majority of the professors ($n = 18$) confirmed that the student did demonstrate good understanding. Shanika, for example, said

that the paraphrase showed “perfect understanding instead of just repeating what [was] said.”

Similarly, the paraphrase about oral health was accepted by 18 professors. The writer, a North American student in public health, defined oral health as specifically relating to only tooth decay or dental caries, which she focused on in her own paper, compared with the definition in the matching source text, which also covered gum disease, tooth loss, pain, cancer, sores, and birth defects. Although some professors ($n = 8$) questioned whether one could exclude any information when paraphrasing a definition from an authorial source such as the World Health Organization, most participants accepted the relevant content transformation. For example, Sharlene commented that “it is a good representation of the source information” and that such a selection of information successfully directs the reader’s attention to the focus of the student’s writing. The following is a similar comment from another Chinese professor of business (comments translated from Chinese are italicized in this paper):

Babby: It is acceptable to select information based on one’s need. I do the same in my own paraphrase[s], especially when referring to a research method in my area.

Babby’s reference to her own writing highlights the role of disciplinary knowledge in assessing paraphrasing, which role is also highlighted in participants’ comments on the paraphrase about feature extraction, which was composed in Chinese by a student in mechanical engineering based on an English source text. The student inserted his own idea of “vibration processing” which, as the student explained, could be a type of “feature of vector” mentioned in the source text. Although several professors in soft disciplines ($n = 8$) found the interpretation problematic because the “whole thing” (i.e., feature of vector) does not necessarily mean or apply to every single aspect (i.e., vibration processing), a total of 14 professors (eight in soft and six in hard disciplines) accepted the interpretation, believing that the student made the right decision. The following is a comment from Sever,
who confirmed the acceptance of the content transformation using his expertise in the area:

Sever: This is my background. I know exactly what this guy is talking about. I think this guy may be focusing particularly on vibration, whereas this [source] context is broader. It could be vibrations or workload. I mean, this is a cutting machine. It’s acceptable.

Based on the participants’ comments, the three paraphrases that generated more positive mentions on content involved a selection of information (e.g., dental caries) and interpretation based on an understanding of either a disciplinary concept (e.g., NGS mechanisms) or a relationship between two disciplinary concepts (e.g., vibration processing and feature of vector). These examples illustrate that students who paraphrase, which action is a microprocess of discourse synthesis, not only select but also interpret relevant information to construct meaning in the new text. While students’ selection of information was acceptable for many professors, interpretations were more likely to be accepted when they were judged to be accurate from the readers’ perspective. Compared with Sever and other professors in hard disciplines who accepted the feature-extraction paraphrase because of their background knowledge, some professors in soft disciplines accepted the paraphrase predicated on their trust in the writer. Such a trust, since it is not grounded in an insider’s perspective, might vary as readers assess content transformation in different paraphrases. As the present data illustrate, more professors chose to trust the writer’s knowledge and accept the content transformation in the paraphrase about products of sequencing than in the paraphrase about feature extraction. Reader assessment, therefore, might not be reliable when the content is outside one’s discipline.

**Paraphrases Generating More Negative Mentions**

Table 4 illustrates five paraphrases that generated more negative than positive mentions on content transformation. Of these paraphrases,
development of tourism received the most negative mentions \((n = 20)\), followed by communication modes \((n = 17)\), maternal mortality \((n = 16)\), descriptive codes \((n = 15)\), and early love \((n = 11)\). These paraphrases received a small number (ranging from zero to seven) of positive mentions. However, only the paraphrase about maternal mortality showed a significant difference between the Chinese and North American professors \((\chi^2 (2, 27) = 6.375, p < .05)\).

The paraphrase about maternal mortality was written by a student in public health who interpreted the data to suggest that reforms were deficient as they failed to achieve the goal set by Millennium Development Goal Five (MDG Five), which goal was listed in a document he had read previously. Most of the negative mentions (10 out of 16) came from Chinese professors who commented that “the deficiency of reforms” was the student’s own opinion, not the idea of the original author. In contrast, half of the North American professors (seven out of 14) did not comment explicitly on the relevant content transformation but saw the paraphrase as having a citation problem—they suggested that the student add a citation about the reforms to improve the paraphrase. The following quotes illustrate the two perspectives:

Mackinzie: The student has changed the original meaning. It is his view, not the original author’s idea. This is not a paraphrase.

Lear: Here the source text just talked about the estimate. It doesn’t make any suggestion of what this means. . . . I would . . . add another [citation], with reference to the MDG Five.

The different perspectives suggest that the Chinese professors tended to focus on the accuracy of content transformation, whereas the North American professors focused on how the student could be guided to improve the paraphrase by adding a citation for the extra information used. In other words, the latter group viewed the paraphrase as having an amendable citation problem rather than a misrepresentation of the source information. Previous research has reported that some Chinese graduate
Table 4
*Five Paraphrases That Generated More Negative Mentions on Content Transformation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content transformation</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Not acceptable</th>
<th>No explicit mention</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>LR</th>
<th>Asymp. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation in tourism</td>
<td>North A.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.106</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>0.017</td>
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<td>Soft</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
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<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication modes</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>6.375</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.374</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.112</td>
<td>0.573</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Descriptive codes</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.829</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early love</td>
<td>North A.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.208</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p < .05.
students tend to not use proper citations in paraphrasing (Shi & Dong, 2018). The present findings suggest that this trend might be because of a lack of attention or guidance from their professors. However, since the pedagogical need to teach students how to cite was only brought up while reviewing one paraphrase in this study, future studies need to verify the difference between faculty across cultural contexts regarding this issue. The fact that no significant differences were found among professors across cultural and disciplinary contexts in their acceptance of most paraphrases suggests that participants’ views revealed mostly individual rather than group differences.

Like the maternal-mortality paraphrase, the paraphrases about the development of tourism and descriptive codes were also based on how the writer interpreted the source information. The student writing about the development of tourism interpreted tourists’ low expectations for entertainment and business-service facilities as a value statement indicating that these factors were less important than public transportation at the tourist site. The student writing about descriptive codes interpreted the data codes as answers to “what, where, and how types of questions.” The participating professors expressed negative views on these interpretations. Many participants ($n = 20$) stated that the interpretation in the paraphrase about the development of tourism was a misunderstanding of the original text’s idea because a low expectation toward something (i.e., entertainment and business facilities) does not mean that the thing is less important. Similarly, over half of the participants ($n = 16$) found that the interpretation in the descriptive-codes paraphrase had few connections to the source text. The following are two typical comments from participants describing these paraphrases:

Sharlene: Low expectations [in the development of tourism mean] I don’t expect something to be high quality or the service to be good. But it doesn’t mean they are not important.
Steven: The paraphrase [about descriptive codes] is less clear than the source text. . . . There’s almost no connection. I just don’t know what they are trying to say.

The other two paraphrases that received mostly negative comments both contained additional ideas. The paraphrase about communication modes had an additional idea of government public relations acting as a two-way communication, though the source text only stated that the government played two roles (information source and noise or interference) in the process of communication. Similarly, the writer of the paraphrase about early love added her own elaboration of how early love or first love is pure (without any material desire) to the source’s idea that “the feeling of love between boys and girls should be called first love.” Commenting on these additional ideas, many professors ($n = 20$) said that the content transformation in the communication-modes paraphrase was a misconstruction of the original text’s idea of government roles (i.e., its duality of source and noise) and that the student wrongly applied the concept of “two-way communication” in government public relations. Similarly, some professors ($n = 11$) commented that the content in the excerpt about early love, except the first sentence (defining early love as first love), was not a paraphrase but the student’s own position or a deeper restating of the topic. The following comments illustrate these sentiments:

Braine: No, I don’t think it’s “two-way” [in communication modes]. It’s mixing together two different concepts. The “two-way” [back and forth] is not really faithful to the original text [which contained the idea of a duality of two roles].

Sandy: I don’t think this [excerpt about early love] is a paraphrase. . . . She probably formed her own ideas while reading. . . . This is her idea.

Participants’ negative comments highlight their concerns of how source texts might be misrepresented when students add their own interpretations or ideas. Professors deemed interpretations unacceptable when there was a potential misunderstanding of the source information (as in

the tourism-development paraphrase) or an unclear connection to the source text (as in the descriptive-codes paraphrase). The professors also found paraphrases unacceptable when they contained an idea not found in the matching source text (as in the paraphrases regarding maternal mortality, communication modes, and early love). Such concerns, again, suggest the importance of the reader’s perspective in paraphrasing. Appropriate content transformation is subject to readers’ judgement on the connectivity between the source and the paraphrased text. If the connecting transformation in discourse synthesis is to join pieces of information (Spivey, 1997), the connecting strategy in paraphrasing is to display a clear relationship between the source and the paraphrased text. It was evident from the students’ explanations that the students all had a rationale for how they wrote their paraphrases. However, some paraphrasing behaviors, as the present study indicates, might be judged unacceptable by their professors.

Other Comments or Suggestions

Table 5 illustrates other comments and suggestions (n = 134) on the eight paraphrases. Apart from comments that mention the need to explain the logic of a content transformation (n = 58, 43%), a few comments are concerned with the difficulties in judging a paraphrase because of a lack of background knowledge (n = 7, 5%). There were also comments that mentioned (n = 16, 12%) the way certain terms were reworded (e.g., replacing “feature” with “feature vector” in the feature-extraction paraphrase, and “mechanism” with “strategies” in the sequencing-products paraphrase). In addition, there were suggestions (n = 43, 32%) that citations could be either added (if the interpretation was based on another reading) or excluded (if the addition was the writer’s own idea). For example, some participants suggested that a citation could be added for the statement “early love is first love” in the early-love paraphrase, for the idea “public relations acts as a two-way communication” in the communication-modes paraphrase, and for the information of MDG Five in the maternal-mortality paraphrase.
Finally, a few professors mentioned that the two Chinese paraphrases about communication codes \((n = 7)\) and feature extraction \((n = 3)\) had too much copying or patch writing, which comments confirm previous observations of substantial textual borrowing in students’ paraphrasing in Chinese (e.g., Shi & Dong, 2018). The present findings also confirm that students copy or patch write in paraphrasing not only at the undergraduate level (e.g., Currie, 1998; Howard et al., 2010) but also at the graduate level (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007). Patch writing, as Howard (1999) has suggested, is how students learn to obtain membership in a discourse community through a long process of practice and the development of academic literacy.

Table 5
Other Types of Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paraphrases</th>
<th>Need to explain</th>
<th>Cannot judge</th>
<th>Inappropriate rewording of a specific term</th>
<th>Wrong use of a citation</th>
<th>Too much copying or patch writing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Early love</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication modes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Development of tourism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Feature extraction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maternal mortality</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Oral health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Descriptive codes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Products of sequencing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the mentions (58, 43%) focused on the need for the writer to explain the content transformation or the connectivity between the source and the paraphrased text. Commenting on the importance of explaining the logic of the writer’s interpretation or paraphrase, the professors wondered, for example, how the “two-way” theory was compatible with the two roles (information source and noise or interference) of the government (n = 11, communication modes) and why “low expectation” meant “less important” (n = 8, development of tourism). Of the eight paraphrases, maternal mortality received the most mentions on the need to explain the paraphrase’s logic (n = 19). These mentions suggest that the student should present the rationale or logic for his interpretation that the reform was deficient. The following is a typical comment from professors regarding the maternal-mortality paraphrase:

Earwin: *The student did not explain clearly. . . . First we should know the number ten years ago. If you want to present your view about the insufficiency of reform, you need to present the data as evidence. . . . The student might have the right interpretation, but he needs to explain, maybe using a footnote.*

The data suggest the importance of explaining one’s interpretation in paraphrasing. Lack of explanation, as the present data illustrate, casts doubt among readers. Professors were concerned when they encountered disruptions in the flow of the text and had a hard time filling in the missing links. Paraphrases that lack explanation could be labeled as misinterpretation, inaccurate representation, or the writer’s own idea rather than a paraphrase. From the constructivist perspective, an author-audience relationship is essential as writers anticipate and use textual cues to influence the readers’ construction process. As Spivey (1984) has noted, the less able discourse synthesizer tends to produce text that puts an extra burden on the reader to make certain connective operations. Therefore, student writers need to be explicit about the connectivity between the source text and the paraphrase. They need to make clear how they reach
their interpretation and develop their own views through paraphrasing. Participants’ concern about the lack of clarity in some student paraphrases confirms the challenge for student writers to develop an ability to anticipate and understand how readers build meaning while reading and assessing their paraphrases and discourse synthesis.

Summary and Conclusion

The present study highlights the reader’s role in assessing a paraphrase. Even though previous observations have suggested that students recontextualize their paraphrases by selecting, interpreting, and adding ideas (Shi et al., 2018; Shi & Dong, 2018), the present study shows that faculty members might disagree about whether such content transformations are acceptable. Many professors commented on the importance of content transformations that accurately and clearly represent the original text’s meaning. The professors tended not to accept content transformations that seemed to contain misunderstandings (e.g., the paraphrase about the development of tourism) or extra information not found in the matching source text (e.g., the paraphrases about descriptive codes, communication modes, and maternal mortality). However, paraphrases that involved a selection of information (e.g., the paraphrase about oral health) or interpretations that accurately represented the source text (e.g., the paraphrases about products of sequencing and feature extraction) were generally accepted. Compared with the Chinese professors, the North American professors focused more on how to add relevant citations for extra information when commenting on the paraphrase about maternal mortality.

The study is limited in its small sample size with many variables (e.g., hard vs. soft disciplines, Chinese vs. English paraphrases, master’s vs. doctoral students). In addition, some paraphrases that were included in the data set are technical and may have required inside knowledge to assess adequately. Future studies could focus on professors in a particular discipline commenting on paraphrases from students in the same discipline. Finally, the participating professors encountered the paraphrases mostly
as standalone pieces, since most of the participants did not ask to read the
text surrounding the paraphrase. There is certainly a difference between
reading a paraphrase in isolation and reading one in the context of a full
paper. Such a difference needs to be further explored in future research.

Despite its limitations, the present study illustrates how some profes-
sors across disciplinary and cultural contexts assess students’ paraphrasing
and think evaluatively about what good paraphrasing is. To help make
content transformations transparent, students are advised to provide ex-
planations to guide readers. The present study reveals that students do
not provide enough explanation. As a result, professors often fail to follow
unwritten interpretations or inferences, wondering what and how certain
source information is selected or interpreted, why new information is
added, in what ways the added information is connected to the matching
source text, and whether the added information is from a different source.
When such details are missing, faculty members make their own infer-
ences and are likely to judge the paraphrase unacceptable. The present
data confirm that paraphrasing, a microprocess of discourse synthesis, is
an active process of providing “textual cues to signal meaning to readers”
(Spivey, 1997, p. 146). It is a process of recontextualization with, as Linell
(1998) put it, “a prospective aspect, addressing particular audiences and
thereby partly anticipating their (re)interpretations” (p. 153).

Following Micciche and Carr (2011), who advocated for explicit
writing instruction for graduate writing, the present study suggests that
paraphrasing should be taught explicitly at the graduate level by respond-
ing to students’ writing while it is in process. For example, in responding
to students’ content transformation in a paraphrase, instructors should
guide students in exploring issues raised by the participants in the present
study, focusing on whether the paraphrased text demonstrates an appro-
priate understanding or interpretation of the matching source text. Such
responses to student writing nurtures “dual effort to read carefully so as to
represent faithfully another’s work and to build from that work in order
to keep ideas in play and advance knowledge” (p. 480). In a workshop
or class context, as the student writer explains and other peers and the instructor discuss the relevant content transformation, both the instructor and students develop an “awareness of issues, approaches, value systems, and meaning-making processes” (p. 496). From the writer’s perspective, attention to the reader’s needs allows the student writer to engage in a social process of writing through reading, paraphrasing, and responding to others’ writing. It is only through such an instructional and interactive process supported by advice and feedback that graduate students can develop appropriate paraphrasing skills.

Acknowledgements

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References


## Appendix A

### Paraphrases, Matching Source Texts, and Writers' Comments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matching source text</th>
<th>Paraphrased text</th>
<th>Writer’s self-report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early love</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people call the feeling of love between boys and girls as “early love,” which is actually an embarrassing expression because it is not scientific.</td>
<td>The so-called “early love” should be “first love.” First love is pure. It is a feeling of love derived from the mutual attraction between boys and girls. It is beautiful love that does not include any material desire. There is no desire for money, power, or marriage. There is only love.</td>
<td>I defined “early love” based on my own understanding, and [I] considered that early love is a kind of first love. There is extensive change in the paraphrase. The source text is too long, so I shortened it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from XXX, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to Shannon-Weaver’s model, any kind of communication activities can easily be seen as a process composed of four essential elements of information source, transmitter, noise, [and] recipient. Viewing government public relations activities from the perspective of communication studies, we will find that the government has two roles in this process—information source and noise, and the media also have two roles in this process—transmitter and recipient. (from XXX, 2010)</td>
<td>From another perspective, according to Shannon–Weaver’s communication model, any kind of communication activities can be seen as a process composed of the four essential elements of information source, transmitter, noise, [and] recipient. As government public relations is a kind of two-way communication activity, the government is playing two roles in this process—information source and noise producer, while the media are playing the roles of transmitter and recipient.</td>
<td>As I preferred to use the definition of “government public relations” by Grunig from the University of Maryland, which indicates that it is “two-way equal excellent public relations,” I added my ideas and included the word “two-way,” which was my preferred understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matching source text</th>
<th>Paraphrased text</th>
<th>Writer’s self-report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of the tourists are satisfied with the traffic and infrastructure of Zhouzhuang, and have a low expectation toward its entertainment facilities and business services and facilities. (from XXX, 2005)</td>
<td>As to the development of tourism in Zhouzhuang, the entertainment facilities and business services and facilities are less important. [footnote]</td>
<td>It is an interpretation of the original text. . . . I thought it could support my viewpoints. I considered that my understanding derived from the original text, not from my imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature extraction is an essential step. The success of a classification system depends on the effectiveness of the features representing the patterns of different conditions. The extracted features should be sensitive to the change of cutting state and insensitive to the change of environmental condition (such as vibration from the ground, workload). (from XXX, 2010)</td>
<td>In a smart detection system, feature vector extraction is an essential step. An effective detection system should depend on the feature vectors to represent the feature information under different conditions. [footnote] As to the feature vectors for vibration processing, they should be sensitive to the change of processing state and insensitive to the change of processing environments.</td>
<td>When I translated the original text, I combined it with some of my ideas. . . . I used “vibration processing,” which was not from the original text. As the feature vector could be any feature, I defined it as “vibration processing,” which was what my paper talks about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The maternal mortality ratio is 359 deaths per 100,000 live births for the five-year period before the survey. (from XXX, 2012)</td>
<td>Unfortunately, a recent estimate of maternal mortality in Indonesia suggests that previous reforms and policies were not sufficient to reduce the country’s MMR according to MDG Five. [footnote]</td>
<td>This is more of an interpretation. . . . I know the goal number from previous reports. This is very far from the goal. . . . It does, to some extent, become my idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matching source text</th>
<th>Paraphrased text</th>
<th>Writer’s self-report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral health is a state of being free from chronic mouth and facial pain, oral and throat cancer, oral sores, birth defects such as cleft lip and palate, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth decay and tooth loss, and other diseases and disorders that affect the oral cavity. (from XXX, 2013)</td>
<td>Oral health is defined as a state of being free from diseases that affect oral cavity, including dental caries (XXX, 2013).</td>
<td>I thought it’s important that I don’t change too much of the original definition. . . . Cause my focus will be on dental caries. It’s the same as “tooth decay.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive codes are similar to manifest codes: they reflect themes or patterns that are obvious on the surface or are stated directly by research subjects. (from XXX, 2010)</td>
<td>With descriptive codes, it is able to answer what, where, and how types of questions with demographic and geographic features (XXX, 2010).</td>
<td>I just transferred the meaning . . . to I feel the simple way to describe what descriptive codes are. . . . because I have put it into the context of [analyzing] the data I collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current next-generation sequencing (NGS) platforms adopt two types of sequencing mechanisms: by synthesis or by ligation. (from XXX et al., 2013)</td>
<td>Two main strategies have been employed to detect the products of sequencing reactions which can be referred to as sequencing-by-synthesis and sequencing-by-ligation.</td>
<td>I kept . . . [the] key-words. . . . It’s more of a simple concept so it is very easy to just use my own words . . . I would say this shows whether I understand it better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Words translated from Chinese are italicized; identical words in the paraphrased text and its matching source text are in bold; and key words in the writer’s comments are also in bold.*

## Appendix B

### Coding Scheme and Examples of Interview Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example of comments*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>There is a connection between the source and the paraphrase.</td>
<td><em>I think this is acceptable. There is no distortion of the original meaning.</em> (Oral health, Sara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not acceptable</td>
<td>There is a misinterpretation or little connection between the source and the paraphrase.</td>
<td><em>It’s wrong and it doesn’t make sense.</em> (Communication modes, Sedge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs more explanation</td>
<td>There is a need to explain the connectivity between the source text and the paraphrase by differentiating one’s own idea from the source’s idea.</td>
<td><em>It is OK with some explanation. . . The student needs to cite the original source and then explain his own view.</em> (Maternal mortality, Madge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to judge</td>
<td>It is difficult to judge because of a lack of content knowledge.</td>
<td><em>I can’t give any comments on this one because I don’t understand the content of the source text.</em> (Feature extraction, Ann)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate rewording</td>
<td>The rewording or omission of a specific term or phrase is inappropriate.</td>
<td><em>The two mechanisms are paraphrased as two strategies. I am not sure if it is appropriate.</em> (Products of sequencing, Madge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic citation use</td>
<td>The citation is wrongly used, including cases in which a citation is either missing or not needed because the paraphrase contains common knowledge or the student’s own idea.</td>
<td><em>It sounds like it [the source text] did coin the phrase “first love;” in which case then this [the student’s paraphrase] is a plagiarism in the sense that it is taking the idea of someone without an attribution.</em> (Early love, Lear)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example of comments*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much copying or patch writing.</td>
<td>There is too much copying or patch writing.</td>
<td>This is very close. I mean the same words. . . . That's disturbing. (<em>Communication modes, Sever</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Comments translated from Chinese are italicized.
Abstract: Academic socialization has been a common framework in writing studies for decades. Recent scholarship on rhetorical genre studies and feedback on writing can develop this paradigm in generative ways. In particular, examining how writers take up feedback as they write in genres can inform how writing pedagogy understands such activities. This study examines and interprets the case of a graduate student as she works with in-person and textually mediated feedback in research group meetings and reviewers’ letters. Approaching graduate students as advanced academic writers—simultaneously performing the role of expert and learning the content needed to be a full member of a discourse community—enables the identification of genre competencies that are needed for such activities in students’ socialization. The article concludes with a discussion of the potential insights these genre competencies might provide for instructors who teach and mentor student writers.

Keywords: feedback, uptake, writing processes, genre competencies, academic socialization

Academic socialization has been a common framework in writing studies for decades (Bartholomae, 2005). This framework considers writing classrooms as sites that initiate student writers into academic discourse communities (i.e., groups with common literacies) through ways of using language, methods, and genres in classroom activities. These activities often include, for example, peer review workshops or annotated bibliographies. Questions remain, however, about how academic socialization functions in the acquisition of disciplinary literacies. For example, research on feedback has yet to show whether writing spaces should bring together writers with similar experiences and disciplines or writers with different experiences and disciplines to foster development as members of discourse communities (Evans & Ferris, 2019). Genre approaches to socialization would recommend engaging with this topic in terms of authenticity (Bawarshi, 2003) by asking whether said writing activities correspond to the actual, novel tasks of a given field (Simpson, 2013). Critics have argued that simulating tasks within academic contexts does not lead to authentic disciplinary development, and thus, writing studies should not use such pedagogical spaces (Freedman et al., 1994). At the same time, sociocognitive frameworks contend that literacy development is not about simulating performances of “meaningful interaction” during the socialization process. Situations and social experiences connected with writing, as Duff and Kobayashi (2010) have argued, “go hand in hand as a part of a process of internalization, performance, and personal transformation through mutual engagement with others” (p. 92).

One way to build on the insights of both genre studies and sociocognitive approaches to academic socialization is to examine the process through the lens of feedback uptake on genres. Utilizing the concept of “genre uptake,” Freedman (2002, as cited in Bawarshi, 2003) has argued that connections between texts (the generic ways in which essays, for instance, resemble one another) shape how student writers respond to textual tasks and consequently perform in those tasks. In this uptake, the user arguably “selects, defines, and represents its object from a set of possible...
others” (Bastian, 2015, para. 5). Feedback that writers get during the writing process functions as a part of this link between texts, often in the form of interactions between writers and reviewers (or mentors or peers) in the context of given genres. A part of “genre competence” (i.e., the ability to compose contextually appropriate texts; Bawarshi, 2003) is realizing that feedback on a text is not a one-way relay of information that is merely accepted or declined. Rather, it is a type of situated and interactional activity (Russell, 1997), and looking at “uptake processes” (Bastian, 2015) in given situations can improve understanding of writers’ interpretations and responses.

Furthermore, the uptake of feedback is particularly relevant to graduate students’ socialization as “advanced academic writers” (AAWs; Tardy, 2009) because the socialization process relies on interactions with disciplinary members during writing activities. When graduate students write articles for publication—performing the role of disciplinary members and AAWs—they interact in authentic activities with experts in their field. At the same time, when graduate students take up feedback, their uptake processes must balance performing expertise and gaining membership in the discourse community with the needs of learning the content of their field and developing disciplinary identities. Researchers who focus on graduate students composing research articles can identify this balance between performing expertise and gaining membership generatively during the socialization process, understanding both activities as “space[s] of social action” (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 10) and sets of “complex performances that take place between and around genres where agency is very much in constant play in relation to myriad forces and facts” (Bawarshi, 2016, p. 247). In other words, these researchers highlight the need for authentic learning activities.

This article focuses on the uptake of feedback by Susan, a PhD candidate in Political Science and Gender and Women’s Studies. The case study shows that her processes of interpreting and responding to feedback in a research-group meeting (RGM) and in reviewers’ letters illustrate
“dialogic spaces” (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) in which comments and advice by disciplinary members are negotiated, interpreted, and responded to, signaling genre competence (Bawarshi, 2003). The article concludes with a discussion of how connecting conversations on feedback and uptake can contribute to understanding the academic socialization of AAWs (Kim, 2018).

Discussions of Uptake and Feedback in Academic-Socialization Research

Genre uptake has been a productive subject of interest in writing-studies scholarship in recent years. As mentioned earlier, it has served as a useful and dynamic “heuristic to understand how texts and genres cohere in contexts” (Bastian, 2015, para. 5). Rhetorical genre studies have focused on the contextual, generic, and textual elements of this phenomenon, producing insightful research on texts that bring together recurring situations and interactions in terms of “set[s]” (Devitt, 2010), “systems” (Bazerman, 1994), or “ecologies” (Spinuzzi, 2004). This initial body of work argued for understanding uptake and connections between texts structurally, positioning writers and their writing activities in context. In the last decade, however, there has been a move to research the role of uptake in writing pedagogy and writers’ performances. Much less studied than topics such as feedback, socialization, or even genre uptake between texts, this recent scholarship has highlighted writers’ perspectives, analyzing how users of genres interpret and perform activities by examining their uptake processes in terms of “memory, translation, and selection” (Bastian, 2015, para. 5); intermediate genres (Tachino, 2012); or mediums (Ficus, 2017). These studies have shown how writers’ prior experiences, epistemes, and focuses shape how writers take up and respond to information.

Recent studies of uptake during students’ writing processes have been framed in terms of writing pedagogy and conducted in composition classrooms (as spaces to socialize students into the academy). Focusing on how new members’ interactions with the academy are influenced by their uptake
of feedback while completing writing assignments in the composition classroom, these studies have shown that prior genre knowledge shapes students’ writing performance in college. Rather than support the development of writing skills, however, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) and Rounsaville (2012) posited that knowledge developed through previous experiences with writing disrupts students’ uptake in postsecondary contexts. Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) argued that this disruption occurs because students often do not select and translate from extant genre knowledge appropriately. The problem, in other words, is one of “negative transfer” (Rounsaville, 2012).

Students who perform better at writing tasks are those who cross boundaries in domain knowledge when they take up said assignments, drawing from their knowledge in “circumspect ways” and thus allowing a transfer of multiple strategies from a selection of genres (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). This was not normal for the composition students Reiff and Bawarshi examined, though, as most exhibited a fixed sense of genre knowledge separate from other domains—a view held by “boundary guarders” (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011, p. 314).

In a similar study to Reiff and Bawarshi (2011), Rounsaville (2012) argued that one composition student, John, struggled to understand a writing assignment because his conceptualizations of academic genres did not foster synthesizing personal and academic evidence. The student was constrained by what Rounsaville called “platforms and interpretive frames” toward academic genres. His inability to understand the term evidence in the assignment sheet illustrates how a “link [between] the current writing task with prior memories . . . is the ‘place,’ the uptake, where the contexts between prior genre knowledge and current task mingle and are translated” (Rounsaville, 2012, para. 30). This examination lends support to Emmons’s (2009) contention that genre knowledge shapes the writer’s “dispositions and subjective orientations” such that “previous experiences with genres fix the process of uptake of subsequent genre encounters” (p. 135). Taken together, these studies make a persuasive case that failing to appropriately take up feedback during the writing process is a function of
“habitual uptake” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). This latter concept is important to consider because “what we [choose] to take up and how to do so is the result of learned cognitions of significance that over time and in particular contexts become habitual” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 86).

The extensive work on the connection between feedback and socialization has included examinations of this connection’s role in graduate student education (Casanave, 2002). Scholars in this area have advocated for incorporating feedback activities into graduate writing pedagogy, from presubmission RGMs to helping students understand reviewers’ feedback postsubmission (Tardy, 2009). Research has focused on interactions during feedback (Mochizuki, 2019), identities that shape students’ experiences with feedback (Madden et al., 2019), and self-regulation (Castello et al., 2013). Mangelsdorf and Ruecker (2018), Kim (2018), and Aitchison (2009) showed the potential ways feedback and interactions support the disciplinary socialization of graduate students. They documented how writing groups help students learn the academic literacy practices needed for membership in the disciplines. They pointed out that these activities tend to become impromptu, default spaces of socialization through writing, a part of the support network cobbled together by the graduate student. They argued that successful networks bring together writers at different stages of their disciplinary socialization, with more advanced writers guiding less experienced writers through “cognitive apprenticeship” (Aitchison, 2009). These writing networks are effective in supporting student development—even when reviewers and writers differ in their disciplines and language abilities—because their writing activities raise “students’ rhetorical awareness and strengthen their understanding of genre conventions” (Mangelsdorf & Ruecker, 2018, p. 25).

Paltridge (2015), Lillis and Curry (2006), Curry and Lillis (2015), and Simpson (2013) all analyzed the importance of negotiating reviewers’ letters, especially for disciplinary interactions in U.S. and Anglocentric disciplinary contexts. Paltridge (2015) found that outsiders and newcomers in knowledge communities, such as graduate students, struggle to take

up requests for changes as feedback that necessitates a response. Curry and Lillis (2015) pointed out how comments on language in the reviewers’ articles impact the uptake of the articles and index a certain view of communication. Consequently, these scholars argued, graduate students must acquire the codes of academic literacies, and their academic socialization must develop these competencies through activities that provide explicit metacommentary (i.e., reflection about language and literacies) when possible. Lillis and Curry (2006) analyzed the role of “literacy brokers,” textual mediators who intercede between writers and their publication contexts, for these types of knowledge development.

Simpson (2013) supported these arguments in his case study of Paulo, a graduate student working through feedback from the principal investigator (who was also his advisor) and journal reviewers. Previous writing experiences during the graduate program were important for Paulo to understand the feedback. Simpson (2013) found that a lack of available feedback—the principal investigator and Paulo’s lab mates were not available during Paulo’s writing processes, and the writing center was not prepared to comment on disciplinary topics—constrained Paulo’s interpretation of reviewers’ comments on his research article. Simpson (2013) helped confirm the importance of literacy brokers: Even though Paulo knew generic conventions, without a source of feedback to clarify reviewers’ comments he struggled to “reorganize and adapt these conventions in ways that fit his individual goals in [the] novel situations” (p. 244).

Building on this previous research, the present case study discusses how genre competencies function in academic socialization by connecting conceptualizations of uptake and feedback. The preceding studies have pointed to the importance of previous experiences in how tasks are taken up and how codes of feedback often remain tacit for student writers. There has also been important scholarship on research-article feedback as mediated by resources in situational contexts, such as literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2006). At the same time, Rabbi (2020) showed limitations in the ways this scholarship can inform writing pedagogy—for example, how
situational and socialization contexts shape the way feedback is taken up in publication genres rather than classroom genres. This case study addresses such topics by providing a picture of the uptake processes of an AAW in the context of feedback activities and genre competence. To this end, I pose the following questions:

- How does an AAW take up in-person and textually mediated feedback while writing research articles?
- How are her uptake processes shaped by memory, selection, and translation?
- How do her genre competencies inform academic socialization?

Methods

A Case for This Case Study

Case studies are ideal for raising questions about course design, decision-making, and practices (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Yin, 2013). In qualitative writing research, they have provided theoretical considerations and ways to innovate pedagogy. Through a focus on writing classrooms, they have represented the emic perspective of the students socializing into the space of higher education (Saidy, 2018).

Case studies of AAWs have also been especially popular in fields focusing on multilinguals (Duff, 2014) and AAWs in transition (Casanave & Li, 2008). These studies have persuasively argued that subject matter expertise does not automatically translate to writing expertise; even highly advanced writers must learn the activity systems (Blakeslee, 2001; Castello et al., 2013) and the language of communicating in their disciplines to perform genres competently (Lillis & Curry, 2006).

In line with critical qualitative methodology undergirding case study research, before introducing the subject and the analytical methods, I will first disclose my own subjectivity and interests. My interest in Susan and her transition into an expert writer is rooted in my own transitions as a
graduate student. My dissertation was on all-but-dissertation graduate student writers as early-career professionals, interpreting them as expert “writers in transition” (Castello et al., 2013), whose practices can demystify the role writing plays in the socialization process. Susan is representative of such a population.

I met Susan while working at my university’s graduate writing center, which she visited regularly. I found her invested in writing processes and motivated to secure an academic career in her discipline. Susan came to political science circuitously. She majored in American Studies during her undergraduate degree and described herself as “always interested in the humanities”; she had also worked with a women’s rights organization in New York City before pursuing a PhD.

Susan was interested in a joint-program graduate degree in political science and gender and women’s studies rather than just political science because she believed it provided a “better chance” for a career. This “strategic disposition” (Rabbi & Canagarajah, 2017) was fundamental to her identification of a community intersecting with both fields during her PhD. Her disposition helped her to conceptualize given activities in terms of the bigger picture, mixing pragmatic needs of immediate and long-term situations. Her committee was made up of professors from political science and women’s studies. This interdisciplinary identity often made her feel like an outsider, and in an interview she shared that she was told by others in the program that she did not “think like a political scientist.”

I identified with this experience. I had also tried to be as pragmatic as possible when I was developing my dissertation on writing in a program more tailored for rhetorical studies. At the same time, I also recognized that Susan and I are both international scholars who were identified as ESL (English as second language) writers, even though we had both received our postsecondary educations in the United States. Like her, I was advised to assemble a network of resources like colleagues, mentors, and friends who understood my identity as an international student and academic
writer. This network has been crucial to my development as both a scholar and a writer in my discipline.

As a researcher, I am aware that stories of graduate students and international students are mostly told in aggregate. Our experiences are reduced to statistics on enrollment, years to completion, publication outcomes, and placements, or lack thereof. I believe situated narratives provide nuances and subtleties impossible to capture in other forms. There is a lot to learn from observing writers as they assemble and make use of resources. In addition to helping scholars understand the complexity of uptake processes, such narratives can also provide ways to think about academic socialization and how academic genres relate to those uptake processes (Rabbi, 2020).

Collecting and Interpreting the Data

The picture presented here comes from a multiyear, IRB-approved, ethnographic study of the academic socialization of graduate students in PhD programs. The resulting narrative is not to be interpreted as representative of all similarly situated writers. Rather, I want to stress Susan’s story as a space to identify a list of genre competencies that could be useful for AAWs in feedback activities.

To learn about Susan’s socialization and writing in her discipline, I interviewed her nine times over 11 months, utilizing the “intermittent time mode” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 63). I met with her and collected data on her writing activities flexibly, “dipping in and out of the research site” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 63) during selective moments and events as they were relevant to my research. These interviews were semistructured and focused on questions related to Susan’s general background and interests, attitudes about writing and her writing processes, and the resources that helped her (see Rabbi, 2020, for the interview protocol). I observed

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1 This mode is about collecting data in instances when she was particularly invested in writing activities. For example, I attended one RGM when Susan was not presenting but was providing feedback to others. I took general notes but did not record the meeting. All the other times I attended RGMs were when Susan was presenting her paper. I recorded those meetings and used one RGM here for analysis.

and recorded several sessions of an RGM in which Susan presented her work. (More details on the RGM are provided below.) I collected a selection of various texts she composed, including research articles (with corresponding cover letters, letters from the editor, and reviewers’ letters that make up the genre sets), syllabi for courses she taught, cover letters and curricula vitae for job applications, and so forth. In this article, I only focus on the genre set for one research article and one RGM. Additional discourse-based interviews were conducted based on this data; these were “talk around texts” (Lillis, 2008, p. 355) that asked about specific texts, literacy events, and writing processes, as well as how these elements functioned in her socialization. There were no fixed questions used for these interviews.

To address my research questions related to the uptake processes shaping Susan’s reception of feedback, I utilized an ethnographic triangulation of a section of the data collected. I examined her responses to feedback by “constantly comparing” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 32) across the data set. This triangulated approach helped me interpret and construct a narrative centered on uptake as a process made up of tasks of “memory, selection, and translation” (Rounsaville, 2012, para. 26). Comparing interviews with observations and transcriptions of RGM interactions, for example, helped me interpret the role of the speaker in feedback uptake. Comparing my interviews, RGM recording transcripts, letters from the editor, the reviewers’ letters and Susan’s responses, and the text of her articles helped highlight differences between interactional in-person uptake and textually mediated uptake, as well as ways in which a medium of activity interrupts habitual uptake (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

Finally, I gave Susan my initial, general analyses to verify the “credibility” of my interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), and I incorporated her responses and concerns into my revisions. For example, Susan, though agreeing with my interpretation, raised concerns about the disclosure of her nationality in the initial drafts of the text. I consequently removed that
detail. Member checks, in sum, helped me ensure my interpretations were valid and ethical (Saidy, 2018).

Findings

Uptake of Feedback in RGMs

Susan’s uptake processes shaped her use of disciplinary readers in monthly RGMs made up of both faculty and graduate students in political science and gender and women’s studies. In these meetings, one member of the group would have an article workshopped by others. The comments took the form of questions, suggestions, and recommendations about the topic, the argument, the method, and the analysis of the paper. During the RGM I examine here, feedback was provided verbally but also supplemented with written feedback by one participant (a tenured professor). Susan’s responses to the in-person feedback suggest that AAWs translate and select feedback for their writing agendas framed through their memory of graduate education (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011) and the prioritization of hierarchy this inculcates (Kim, 2018).

Susan took up the feedback in the RGM substantially as she rethought the focus of her overall paper through processes framed by her advisor’s comments during the session. This session took place at a restaurant in a hotel on campus, during a quiet time of the day. It operated as a somewhat informal peer review of a draft. Participants, who had read the article before the session, advised Susan on developing the piece for publication. At the end of the session, Laura (a professor in political science and women’s studies) and Linda (Susan’s advisor and professor in political science and women’s studies) provided Susan with their summative comments:

Laura: I think you need to find your stronger argument and organize your stuff around that.

Susan: So, do you find a stronger argument for a women’s studies journal?
Laura: There are all these interesting dynamics about gender and the context for that story [a topic fit for a women's studies journal].

Linda: But there are two ways to tell that story, though. One is that here are the social, political, and economic ways that these women are brought in or not brought in. That is the article that is general . . . The other one is the identity one . . . That is the one I would send to the journal . . . (RGM, April 20, 2015)

Laura’s feedback about finding the strongest argument in the paper and organizing around it could have been read as tacit criticism that the paper lacked an adequate focus. Susan certainly interpreted the comment in that way; she said in a follow-up interview that her takeaway from the RGM was that “the paper [is] all over the place and the group said [she] should break it up into two papers.” Yet her response in the RGM also showed that Susan translated the comment into a specific query: She asked Laura what would be “a stronger argument for a women's studies journal.” That is, the uptake processes transformed Laura’s assessment into an opportunity to ask for an explicit recommendation. Susan understood, as a socialized member of the field, that the members of the research group are experienced members of the discipline and can speak authoritatively about an appropriate framing for such audiences. Linda, her advisor, stated that she read the paper’s argument about identity as a better fit for a women’s studies journal (“That is the one I would send to the journal”).

Susan remembered Linda’s point above those made by others in the RGM, showing the indirect ways literacy sponsors (Lillis & Curry, 2006) can shape feedback activities. Her interpretation of the RGM feedback illustrated that a successful writer understands that feedback (even from experts) must be selectively negotiated. Susan knew to pursue certain threads and pass over others, and her uptake processes shaped this. She said:

My initial idea was how to look at how marriage migrants are situated politically rather than socially. But from the group, I got the point that they like the idea of how Chinese migrants identify themselves while in Taiwan. My advisor said
looking at their political and economic and social integration, it is generic. I want this to be strong for women’s studies, and so identification is more [salient] in that field.

Susan’s reading of the group’s feedback shows an important point: Hierarchy matters in the uptake of feedback (Evans & Ferris, 2019; Kim 2018). It matters even in instances when the people providing feedback are all experts, and a framing perspective helps the writer select and filter suggestions. A hierarchy provides a way to generate this framing. Susan might have remembered the group’s responses in terms of Laura’s comments about gender dynamics and comments, for example, but she did not mention it. She also might have remembered comments by others in the group, for example, a remark by another professor that the article needed to include an analysis comparing ethnicities in terms of political opinions in Taiwan.

Susan remembered her advisor’s comment as the takeaway. Linda stood for the entire group and the discipline overall in the uptake. Susan recalled how Linda summed up the group’s assessment: “They like the idea of how Chinese migrants identify themselves.” Susan’s socialization as a graduate student had fostered a prioritization of the advisor, on whom she relied to understand her writing. Susan remarked that when “[her] drafts are ready to be sent out, it’s pretty much [Linda’s] approval.” Her memory of previous experiences with multiple writing processes and other interactions during her PhD had shaped her processes such that her advisor implicitly dictated what was prioritized and framed during uptake (Kim, 2018; Simpson, 2013). The RGM’s feedback is taken up—uptake in relation to selection and translation—in terms of Linda’s advice that the focus of the paper should switch from political situatedness to identification.

**Uptake of Feedback in Article Publication**

Susan’s negotiation of reviewers’ comments on another article also shed light on her uptake processes. During the processes of writing and publishing an article, Susan worked with textually mediated feedback from

editors and reviewers, and her responses were shaped in crucial ways by her insider knowledge as acts of memory. The selection and translation processes also took place over a length of time, interrupting habitual uptake (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010) because they forced her to unpack how she took up and interpreted comments. The article had initially been submitted to a journal focusing on sociology research, but it was rejected. However, Susan also received comments from reviewers and a recommendation from the editor for a journal to which she might consider submitting the article:

I sent it to . . . a sociology journal . . . It was rejected . . . they had issues mainly with my data. So I talked to my advisor, and she suggested ways in which I could fix the data issues, so I fixed it, and I sent it off again [to the other journal the editor] recommended.

A “strategic disposition” (Rabbi & Canagarajah, 2017) shaped Susan’s practices and uptake in this situation. It also showed that a crucial part of literacy brokering is ensuring that feedback is appropriately taken up (Curry & Lillis, 2015). The editor’s comments enabled Susan to translate the rejection as an opportunity to “fix” her data before submitting it to the recommended journal. However, before submitting to the new journal, Susan conferred with her advisor (evidencing again the implicit effects of the mentorship models of graduate education shown in the previous example), who mediated her understanding by telling her that the new journal “was a lower ranking journal [but it] was a good journal.”

The article went through multiple rounds of review at this new journal before it was published. After one round of substantial revisions, the journal’s editors told Susan that they had considered rejecting the article. They concluded that she still had not revised the article satisfactorily, and the journal did not provide multiple opportunities to make major revisions. In an ambivalent move of “academic brokering,” they wrote in their letter to her that “[they] were on the fence as to offer an opportunity to revise again or reject the manuscript” and that Susan should “take this final opportunity to study the reviewers’ comments and respond appropriately.” They
stressed, in other words, that Susan’s uptake of feedback needed to be substantial and applied to the textual revisions accordingly.

The textually mediated feedback Susan received for the article showed that the reviewers placed significant weight on the analysis, argument, and language of the article. The reviewers focused on these issues through directive statements (Paltridge, 2015), with elaboration on how requested changes might be carried out (Curry & Lillis, 2015). The editor’s letter underscored these “global” dimensions of the feedback by encouraging Susan to take the “opportunity to go through and make sure that the paper is cohesive, the argument is strong, and the research design is clear.” The situation for Susan, in other words, exhibited how efficacious feedback in the written form can be explicit and elaborated (as necessary). It also corresponded to the genre pedagogy framework, which emphasizes instruction in coherence (form knowledge), argumentation (rhetorical knowledge), and research design (subject-matter knowledge) in disciplinary communication (Tardy, 2009).

Susan took up the feedback rhetorically, as something to be negotiated, but addressed all points. Textually mediated feedback provided her space to “study the reviewers’ comments” and consider how best to respond. Because of the nature of literacy, her response and interactions were not immediate, and so they interrupted a habitual uptake (Bawarshi & Rieff, 2010). These writing processes afforded her the identification of the role of persuasion in negotiating reviewers’ comments. She said: “I will need to play [the relevance of the research] up more. It is not going to satisfy the readers based on the promise of the research.” This understanding also shaped her uptake of feedback regarding scientific language in the discipline, as she asserted: “some reviewers . . . want the paper to be really political science-γ [sic] in terms of avoiding words like ‘inspiring’ and ‘encouraging.’ If you are gonna [sic] talk about that, just talk about how they are correlated, how they are positively or negatively correlated.”

The high stakes of successfully navigating reviewers’ comments meant Susan had to be less selective in her considerations of feedback. Rather
than responding to certain comments and letting others pass (as she did during the RGMs), Susan addressed all comments to the satisfaction of the editors. Otherwise, as the editor's letter warned, her article would be rejected. The editor's feedback, in other words, functioned as the dominant frame for her uptake of reviewers' comments in the way Linda's perspective shaped Susan's takeaways from the RGM. Susan's rewriting of her text and her response letter communicated that her revised article responded to all comments from reviewers but also showed that she still translated them as suggestions or advice (Paltridge, 2015).

This interpretation can be seen in her uptake of a reviewer's comment that the argument in the “first half of the paper . . . [or] the set-up” needed to be “circumspect,” evidenced in the corresponding textual changes made to the paper. The reviewer wrote that Susan's articulation of the literature on the “role model” effect in her text “misrepresents the literature.” In response, Susan drew from her knowledge and experience (i.e., memory) that “the social sciences have to care about generalizability” to interpret this feedback and rewrite her text. She wrote in her letter to the editor that she took the reviewer’s “advice” and

remove[d] any language that may imply that there is only one mechanism in which female politicians could serve as role models . . . Watching my word choices enable[d] me to avoid generalizability of all literature on the role model effect, as well as overcome the reviewer's concern.

Susan's use of the term *generalizability* to communicate how she translated the reviewer’s “advice” represents a connection between the activities of her academic socialization as a social scientist and the genre function of a research article in that field. This use of disciplinary discourse signaled that Susan understood that “scholarly conversations” are a textual construction and that the reviewer's concern about “misrepresenting the literature” had to be taken up. This is a crucial competence of academic expertise (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Rinck & Boch, 2012). A less advanced academic writer, one could imagine, might interpret the comment

of being more “circumspect” as a critical assessment of their knowledge of the field (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). Susan, illustrating insider membership and knowledge, translated the comment as a directive that she should study and represent the role model effect in the field more precisely.

This insider knowledge is also arguably evidenced in her explanations of not accepting certain suggested changes. In one instance, she refused to elaborate on her rationalization of assumptions of “gender paradox” in East and Southeast Asia, as a reviewer had advised. Susan, in her cover letter for the draft, stated that:

I appreciate the reviewer’s suggestion on including a few possible reasons for my expectations . . . As I try to keep in mind the word limit of the manuscript, I emphasize that I do not directly test the effect of the gender paradox on women’s representation and participation.

Calling the feedback a “suggestion” shaped Susan’s uptake processes in certain ways and afforded this response. She could recognize the comment was a suggestion and communicate to the editors that it had been appropriately considered but not applied. Her response was framed in terms of observing the length requirements of the text, something the editor had mentioned in all their letters (signaling its emphasis). Her previous experiences told her that genre requirements of the form must be considered, and so she used the editor’s comments in their letters to frame her response rejecting the suggestion.

Discussion

Susan’s Genre Competencies for Taking Up Feedback Meaningfully

Academic socialization for graduate students is usually structured by feedback activities, and for AAWs, these activities often involve writing articles and other authentic genres in their communities. The importance and frequency of these activities in socialization raises the question of how genre competence, or a fitting response, is enacted in such situations.
How do AAWs take up feedback appropriately in given contexts? How is this process shaped by socialization experiences and agendas? What can writing studies do to facilitate these feedback activities? Susan’s case study shows that AAWs must be adept in their uptake processes for framing feedback appropriately for their goals. Susan’s uptake processes are a function of her socialization and her interactions during her program. They have shaped her experiences with feedback, her ability to home in on certain aspects of the feedback over others, and her ability to represent the feedback in ways that suit her agenda. Susan’s genre competences vis-à-vis uptake and feedback, from this case study, provide these takeaways:

- Feedback activities are effective when approached with a self-defined agenda;
- Feedback situations require the explicit acknowledgment of hierarchy;
- Feedback utterances—recommendations, advice, suggestions, comments, and so forth—must be interpreted and translated; and
- Feedback procedures should interrupt habitual uptake.

The first thing to notice is that Susan did not approach feedback situations passively. Well-versed in the ways feedback can develop the text and genre, she controlled the agenda in both instances. There are multiple reasons for this control and agency. Susan was well advanced in her academic socialization as a PhD candidate. She knew her data and the research more thoroughly than the people in her research group or the experts reviewing her submission. She also had a sense of how she wanted to present herself through the text; in her own words, she wanted to communicate her contribution and be “strong for women’s studies” even as a political scientist.

Writing scholarship has highlighted how successful writers in the disciplines exhibit well-developed metacognitive and self-regulatory abilities (Negretti, 2012; Rounsaville et al., 2008). These studies pointed out that writing processes are effective when the onus is put on writers to incorporate revisions and justify their choices. Learning takes place as writers
practice understanding, strategizing, monitoring, and modifying performances in said activity; negotiate feedback reflectively; and situate it in broader contexts. Susan repeatedly brought conversations in the RGM back to her goals of publication, turning comments about the lack of focus back to discussions of the target journal. This agency helped her avoid the confusion writers might face when they receive contradictory pieces of feedback (Kim, 2018; Mangelsdorf & Ruecker, 2018). There was clear ownership of the activity in Susan’s use of the group as a part of her network of support. This also meant that she self-regulated her use of these resources for feedback based on the text, the stage she was in during her writing processes, and her general aim for feedback.

Second, Susan used feedback from authority figures to frame her uptake. Although she may have set the agenda for the RGM and the review process, the hierarchies acted as a filter for these uptake processes. She had been sufficiently socialized into the academy to recognize that disciplines have chains of command and that uptake processes ought to take this into account (Evans & Ferris, 2019). Literacy sponsors and brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2006) impact the way genres are performed in practice. In both the RGM and the review process for the publication, utterances by figures of authority shaped the way Susan engaged with comments. Laura’s comment about finding the strongest argument and the editor’s note about “studying” the reviewers’ comments and responding appropriately provided a lens for how Susan might take up comments from reviewers and other members. This relates to the earlier remark in the first part of the findings about deciding which reviewers’ comments to select out of the ones the editor suggested should be addressed.

Genre approaches leave room for recognizing the role of power and hierarchy in textual operations (Cotterall, 2011; Tardy, 2009). Susan’s uptake processes highlight this presence. In her RGMs, she selected and translated feedback from the RGM into what would be the “strongest argument for a women’s studies journal.” She took up the feedback from the reviewers’ comments as a suggestion (“including a few possible reasons”)
that she could forego adherence to word limits. She knew that framing her response to those comments as suggestions delimited by the editors’ advice made them negotiable (Paltridge, 2015).

The third thing to recognize is that Susan interpreted and translated feedback in both cases. She took feedback as a dialogic space of negotiation (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This competence not only signaled to reviewers during the publication process that Susan was a member of the discipline but also influenced her uptake processes (Aitchison, 2009). During her interactions with other members in the RGM, she translated a comment on a lack of focus into an opportunity to ask for directions. Her use of the rationale of generalizability about the role model effect showed how Susan often took up feedback through the terms and discursive context of the discipline. Its values and epistemes colored the suggestions and recommendations the reviewers made, and Susan could interpret them effectively because she was competent in these aspects of the genre of article writing.

Uptake researchers have pointed toward the need for genre users to understand that texts are not fixed (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Rounsaville, 2012). The problem arises when genres and activities are seen as static. Even feedback in high-stakes situations such as reviewers’ reports is negotiable; academic writers need to understand “directions, suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations” (Paltridge, 2015, p. 111) as rhetorical utterances. One can respond to them and take them up appropriately as long as one is sensitive to the academic situation and can respond in those terms. Simply rejecting or refusing to take up feedback is not a legitimate move; responding to it coherently, articulated in disciplinary discourse, is the more fitting response.

Finally, the feedback practices identified here point out the generative effects of breaking habitual uptake (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Rounsaville et al., 2008). Studies of uptake and writing processes show the need to interrupt habitual uptake through reflection and unpacking one’s mental process. Thinking and responding slowly and procedurally to feedback

is fundamental to critical thinking and learning during academic socialization (Negretti, 2012). The textually mediated aspect of feedback and interaction during the review process of publication meant that Susan had to consider the feedback and consider the various ways she might understand it (Lillis & Curry, 2006). She had to be circumspect in her uptake, as one reviewer recommended. She had to think about how her rewrites ought to persuade the readers “by playing up” her research contributions (Rabbi, 2020). Her revisions during these processes were not automatic, but they were careful considerations of developing an argument in response to the use of the texts of the genre set (Tachino, 2012). She could distinguish between “directions, suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations” (Paltridge, 2015, p. 111) in the feedback and interpret what could and could not be negotiated. The stakes of publication and the textually mediated nature of the comments made by the reviewers and editors prompted Susan’s deliberative process; the need to carefully read the reviews interrupted habitual interpretation and responses.

Research on circumspection during students’ writing processes shows its importance for learning during socialization. It provides the space in which development occurs (Simpson, 2013), and literacies in this space represent the materialization of the uptake space. Many researchers have argued that the immediate goal of circumspection is to foster writing competencies regarding feedback (Evans & Ferris, 2019; Kim 2018) and metacognition (Negretti, 2012). At the same time, textually mediated feedback activities also have the added benefit of interrupting habitual uptake by encouraging circumspection and engagement with reviewers’ comments, helping the author understand them rhetorically. The more advanced the student writer is when they are participating in circumspection, the more effective this mode of feedback is. AAWs are sufficiently socialized to be able to decode comments (Paltridge, 2015); what is needed is space to reflect on and plan a circumspect response.

Implications and a Takeaway

This case study on the perspective of a graduate student as an AAW identifies important facets of genre competence that have implications for writing pedagogy. It shows that Susan’s writing processes worked because they fit into her socialization framework, whether in the context of her research group activities or textually mediated genre writing. Though basing my suggestion on one case study, I propose that peer review and feedback activities for graduate students work when they are well structured. This implication is worth considering, regardless of the philosophy with which writing instruction is approached—whether writing tasks are seen in terms of academic socialization or critical pedagogy, or (more likely) both.

Clear structure and clear agendas lead to greater investment from writers (Aitchison 2009; Simpson, 2013) and help them select from the various suggestions, recommendations, directives, and other types of advice they receive. Literacy sponsors have a role to play in these processes by scaffolding feedback activities while also providing space for new members to choose their networks of writing support. Disciplinary faculty could do this by working collaboratively with writing-support programs or asking for student narratives of reflection on disciplinary socialization. They might also guest lecture in transdisciplinary spaces to elaborate on their experiences in their respective fields. Designers of such spaces might therefore consider how they can create hierarchies in feedback activities and networks of sponsors because such resources would go some way in simultaneously socializing new graduate students and investing in feedback activities. Continued research in this area is also needed as such pedagogical frameworks are implemented (Evans & Ferris, 2019).

Such structured approaches to peer review in writing classrooms at the K–12 and the first-year writing (e.g., Eli Review, the CARES [Congratulate-Ask Questions-Request More Information-Evaluate-Summarize] feedback framework, etc.) levels have grown in recent years. These initiatives and approaches can be extended to writing pedagogy for more advanced

students, aligning directive pedagogical genre paradigms with research paradigms, such as academic-discourse socialization frameworks for understanding writing. These endeavors could further writing studies’ agenda of fostering critical thinking, understanding writing phenomena, and training members to communicate in the disciplines. Seeing writing as a community-based, interactive skill is a major insight of writing studies, and we must always advocate for writers to identify and cobble together networks of support as a crucial part of their writing processes. From my perspective, those who have provided feedback on my writing have been a crucial resource for my disciplinary development.

This case study shows the value of using empirically grounded stories of writers and writing practices to inform our theorizations. Susan’s story illustrates that writers’ performances layer multiple functions and that no single writing theory can capture all facets of the publication and socialization phenomenon. Researchers must keep documenting what writers are doing when they write in different contexts and activities, generating the types of situated information with which writing instruction and programs can be developed further. This research might ask how the uptake processes of feedback transfer across contexts and situations during graduate education. Do graduate students transfer knowledge differently when negotiating feedback in disciplinary spaces than when negotiating feedback from nondisciplinary spaces? What would it mean if they did? We might also ask how novice and experienced writers’ conceptualizations and experiences of these activities might differ, and how such differences might impact genre uptake of feedback.
References


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