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The Rhetoric Revision Log: A Second Study on a Feedback Tool for ESL Student Writing

Natalie Marie Cole

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The Rhetoric Revision Log: A Second Study on a Feedback Tool for ESL Student Writing

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Master of Arts

A common pattern in teacher feedback to ESL writing is to provide students feedback on primarily grammar, often sidelining content (Ferris, 2003). This research is a second study of an original study done by Yi (2010) on a rhetoric revision log. This Rhetoric Revision Log (RRL) helped teachers and students track content errors in writing. This research further studies the success of the RRL with some minor changes made based on previous research results.

Data consists of the Rhetoric Revision Log (RRL) given to 42 students in three different ESL writing classes at the same level with four different teachers. All students' pretests, posttests, response to surveys in regards to the use of the log, response to interviews in regards to the log, and the data on content-based needed revisions were analyzed. Teachers' responses in interviews were examined, as well, to draw conclusions about the efficacy of the log.

Results show that the use of the RRL helped students reduce content errors in writing. Findings from student surveys and interviews indicate that a majority of students find the RRL beneficial, and teacher interviews provided positive feedback about the implementation of the log in ESL writing classes.

Keywords: log, ESL writing, feedback, rhetoric

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Finally, a special gratitude goes out to the faculty and students at Brigham Young University and at BYU's English Language Center. The teachers and students involved in this research and my fellow classmates have contributed a great deal to this process. I am especially indebted to Judson Hart, whose guidance and motivation will never be forgotten.

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PREFACE

This thesis was prepared as a manuscript to submit to *Writing & Pedagogy*, which meets the TESOL MA guidelines. *Writing & Pedagogy* was selected because of its focus on writing and teaching writing across many areas, including English as a Second Language (ESL). This journal was also selected because the affiliated research was published in this journal in 2014, and a second research study on this rhetoric tool might be of interest to the readers of this journal.

Articles submitted to *Writing & Pedagogy* must be original research articles, articles critically reviewing research, or articles discussing research. Research must adhere to the guidelines by institutional review board, and articles must be between 7500-9000 words. This article meets these requirements, with research being performed under IRB requirements and the total word count being 9,182 (including title page, all tables and figures, acknowledgements, preface, references, and appendix pages).

An alternative target journal is *Journal of Response to Writing*. This journal is also focused on writing – specifically on response practices, which is related to this research. Articles for this journal must be no more than 8,000 words.

Introduction

Writing is a large part of a student's academic career. Writing is viewed as an important competency necessary among many of the common majors for ESL learners. While writing is highly valued in academia, it is also very challenging for ESL students. As such, teacher feedback on writing is often seen as a valuable tool to help students improve.

Providing feedback that helps students improve their writing skills can be a daunting task for teachers. Many teachers and researchers are interested in how to provide appropriate feedback that is clear and helpful. One of the many challenges of providing feedback to ESL student writing is the challenge of finding a balance between grammar and rhetoric. Feedback to ESL student writing has largely been grammar-focused, with the focus on grammar being predominant in feedback theory and practice until the 1970s. The focus on grammar resumed again in theory as well as in practice starting in the 1990s (Ferris, 2002). Research on tools and procedures used to improve teacher feedback on grammar has been ongoing (Evans, Hartshorn, Cox, & Martin de Jel, 2014; Ferris, 2003; Ferris, 2013, Zamel, 1985; Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

However, the focus on rhetoric in teacher feedback to student writing is also a priority in many academic disciplines (Beason, 1993; Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010). Although many teachers may want and intend to provide equal feedback between grammar and rhetoric, the reality is often that feedback is predominately focused on grammar and rhetoric is limited or all together overlooked.

In a study conducted by Yi (2010), a log created to focus teacher feedback on rhetoric in student writing was created and tested. Rhetorical conventions, according to Yi et al. (2014), are the "elements of a text that contribute to the organization, presentation, development, and flow of

ideas, as well as word choice" (p. 339). The log, called the Rhetoric Revision Log (RRL), consisted of rhetorical elements of writing and used a coding system to provide feedback to student writing on those rhetorical elements. The study consisted of two treatment groups and one control group, all involving writing classes at the Intermediate High level. The two treatment groups were as follows: the *log-only* group and the *log + conference* group. The control group did not use the RRL. All groups were composed of ESL writing classes at Brigham Young University's English Language Center, with one teacher per class and sixty-six students total. Out of the two treatment groups, the *log only* group used the RRL without any writing conferences, while the *log + conference group* used the RRL in addition to individual writing conferences between the teacher and students.

The goal of Yi et al.'s (2010) study was to determine whether rhetoric logs plus individual writing conferences improved ESL student writing. Each group was given a pretest of a thirty-minute timed essay at the beginning of the semester and a posttest of a thirty-minute timed essay at the end of the semester, which were all rated using a rubric. Throughout the semester, each group was required to write three drafts of three different essays, with feedback given by teachers on the first two drafts of each essay. Two of the groups used the RRL with every draft of every essay. A rubric, called the Essay Writing Rubric, was also used to analyze the essays that students in every group wrote, as seen in Appendix C. The Essay Writing Rubric was divided into nine categories that focused on both content and linguistic accuracy. Each group also participated in student-teacher writing conferences for every essay. One of the groups using the RRL referred to this log during conferences; the other group using the RRL, however, did not refer to this log during conferences.

This research found that rhetoric logs helped teachers to improve feedback on rhetorical

aspects in writing, which is a common struggle for teachers due to the pressure they feel to focus feedback on linguistic accuracy. The study also found that students, overall, improved in content from draft to draft and essay to essay when the rhetoric log was used along with writing conferences. A repeated measures ANOVA on the data of pre and posttest scores reflected a statistically significant improvement from pre to posttest, with the log + conference group improving the most. Review of the rhetorical logs and all drafts of every essay showed that the log + conference group also reduced the number of rhetorical revisions needed from the first to the second draft of every paper, and reduced the number of needed revisions more than the other two groups.

Although successful, the RRL research was only one study consisting of a limited number of teacher and student subjects. Further study with more students and teachers would be beneficial to confirm the success of the log and to expose any weaknesses of the log. In addition, the teachers' perspectives of the log were not evaluated in-depth. This article presents the results of subsequent study performed on the RRL with those concerns in mind. The goals of this study were (1) to determine whether further success of the log could help validate its pedagogical purpose if rhetorical aspects of student writing improved, (2) to expose any weaknesses of the log, and (3) to analyze teachers' perspectives on the log to determine if the log is manageable to use and to determine what weaknesses the log contains.

Previous Studies

In order to understand the purpose of this study, a review of other literature that relates to and influences this study will be provided. The literature review will examine (a) direct versus indirect feedback, (b) form versus rhetoric in regards to focus of feedback practices, (c) the

importance and need to make feedback clear, and (d) teachers' perspectives on feedback practices.

Direct Versus Indirect Feedback

There are various types of feedback when it comes to both grammar and rhetoric. In grammar, there are various tools and procedures that provide both direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback is feedback that provides the writer with the correct word, form, structure, etc. (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Indirect feedback is where the error is indicated, often through means of a symbol or a code, but the correct version is not provided (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

One form of indirect feedback in grammar is written corrective feedback (WCF) (Bitchener et. al, 2005; Ferris, 2013; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF), is one specific form of WCF which uses a system of symbols to identify grammatical errors for students to track and correct (Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, & Anderson, 2010; Evans, Hartshorn, Strong-Krause, 2011; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010; Sheen, 2007). With indirect methods such as DWCF, students are to learn and determine on their own how to correct an error. This method of scaffolding could improve self-monitoring in writing, and has shown that students do produce more accurate writing samples when using DWCF compared to students who do not use the method (Kurzer, 2017).

With rhetoric, however, there is no such known tool for indirect feedback. Common feedback methods for rhetoric in writing include teacher comments on paper, teacher-student writing conferences, oral comments via recording devices, and rubrics – all of which are generally used as direct feedback. While all of these types of feedback are helpful, more forms of indirect and clear feedback could be welcomed. The use of a coding system in rhetoric might

lead students to produce more accurate writing due to the scaffolding indirect feedback provides, as has been the case with DWCF (Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, & Anderson, 2010; Evans, Hartshorn, Strong-Krause, 2011; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010; Sheen, 2007). Thus, more research on a rhetoric coding system is warranted.

Form Versus Rhetoric

Similar to Yi's (2010) rhetoric log, studies have shown that logs focused on grammatical aspects of writing can have value in helping learners locate and correct errors (Bitchener et. al, 2005; Ferris, 2013; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). DWCF is one system that utilizes a tracking tool similar to a log (Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, & Anderson, 2010; Evans, Hartshorn, Strong-Krause, 2011; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010; Sheen, 2007). Despite Truscott's (1996 & 1999) claim that WCF is ineffective, WCF is still implemented in classrooms because teachers and researchers find it beneficial for learners (Ferris, 2003; Myers, 2003; Eckstein, 2013), because students want and expect grammar correction (Moussu, 2013; Ferris, 1997; Evans, Hartshorn, & Strong-Krause, 2011), and because it has shown to improve student writing under certain circumstances (Bitchener, 2008). In addition, grammar correction is necessary at certain stages in learning (Ferris, 2002). Grammar tools such as that used with DWCF have shown promising results in correcting linguistic errors, but a similar tool for rhetoric has not been as thoroughly researched and utilized.

Studies in second language writing indicate that feedback on rhetoric is important in many academic subjects and disciplines (Beason, 1993; Basturkmen, East, and Bitchener, 2014; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010). Additionally, Moussu (2013) states there is often a rhetoric-

focused approach to writing in classrooms on college campuses. These studies may emphasize the importance of rhetoric in writing, but none include a specific tool that utilizes a coding system to help both students and teachers focus on rhetoric – hence, the need for further study and support of the Rhetoric Revision Log (RRL).

Although rhetoric is important, we cannot ignore the balance between rhetoric and grammar. Focus on grammar can be a preference in some instances, such as for lower-level learners (Eckstein, 2013). However, Zamel (1985) argues that feedback on accuracy in writing can be less important than feedback on content and rhetorical errors during the writing process because of the many changes the writing goes through during the writing process. If part of a text is changed on a larger scale, then grammatical feedback might no longer be applicable. Staben and Nordhaus (2009) challenge the idea of working with grammar early in the drafting process rather than on content. Staben and Nordhaus claim, “ESL students, much like their native English-speaking (NES) counterparts, have much to gain from looking at the whole text” (p. 78). However, the linguistic feedback can still be overall relevant and beneficial during the drafting process. The need for a tool that can help provide feedback on content but not disrupt the balance between content and grammar is apparent.

Making Feedback Clear

In addition to giving feedback on rhetoric, making feedback clear and beneficial is important. However, it is also challenging. Along with this challenge comes the question of whether or not students will actually make the needed revisions in subsequent drafts. A study by Ferris (1997) which focused on teacher feedback to writing and students’ responses to that feedback showed that, in general, teacher commentary is beneficial to students, as long as revisions are encouraged or mandated. However, Ferris' research also acknowledges the

common problems with teacher feedback to student writing, including teacher assumptions that students understand all the comments teachers make. This is simply one of multiple common problems with teachers' commentary in response to student writing. According to Zamel (1985), teachers' comments on student papers can be vague, which does not help students to know exactly how to revise their texts. Vague comments and questions that confuse students include "Word Form," "What do you mean?" etc. (Zamel, 1985, p. 89). When teacher commentary is more abstract and is not understood by the student, the feedback is not as effective. As stated by a student, "Too often comments are written to the paper, not to the student" (Sommers, 2006, p. 250). Students will not benefit from comments that are complex and indirect. A coding system that provides feedback on rhetoric may help students understand feedback in a way that is systematic and familiar, rather than trying to navigate through complex and perhaps ambiguous comments.

Teachers' Perspectives on Feedback

According to Montgomery and Baker (2007), "Teachers may not be fully aware of how much feedback they give on local (i.e., spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and global (i.e., ideas, content, and organization) issues" (p. 83). Montgomery and Baker (2007) claim that many teachers are unaware of whether or not they are providing balanced feedback on both local and global errors. They have also found that teachers are often unsure if the feedback they give reflects their actual beliefs about feedback (p. 83). Much emphasis is placed on grammar in ESL writing, which results in a lack of balance between feedback on rhetoric and feedback on linguistic accuracy. Although there are tools that can help focus feedback on rhetoric, few focus specifically on rhetoric and none involve a coding system that help make feedback more efficient.

Research Questions

This review of the research indicates the need for a tool that will focus on rhetoric in writing and help make teacher feedback more clear. Yi's (2010) original study accomplished this to some extent. This study aims to further explore the efficacy and limitations of the RRL by testing the RRL under similar conditions as in Yi's study, with some minor modifications made based off Yi's results and recommendations. The following research questions will be explored in this study:

1. What is the effect of the RRL on student writing compared to the writing of students in a control group?
2. Are teachers' responses to the Rhetoric Revision Log positive?
3. Are there categories on the Rhetoric Revision Log that are not effective for the Intermediate High level?

Procedures

The reported results of this study consist of classes from one treatment group and one control group, and excludes the results of four other classes that also used the RRL¹. Both the treatment group and the control group consisted of three writing classes each, all at the Intermediate High level. The Intermediate High level was chosen for the study to test the instrument at the same proficiency level and under the same conditions that it was tested in Yi's (2010) study.

Rhetoric Revision Log

The Rhetoric Revision Log created by Yi (2010), with some modifications made based on the recommendations in the original research, was implemented in all writing classes in the

treatment group. The log is divided horizontally into the four levels of a paper that teachers focus on when giving ESL students feedback: word, sentence, paragraph, and content. The RRL also has areas within each level that focus on specific rhetorical features that are common struggles for ESL students in writing. Finally, the log is also divided vertically by essay, with each essay further subdivided by drafts (see Table 1).

The first modification that was made to the RRL was adding the category "Concluding Sentences." Concluding sentences are sentences at the end of paragraphs in the body of an essay that summarize the entire paragraph. Teachers from the previous research suggested this addition to the RRL due to the consistent struggle students showed in writing concluding sentences at the end of body paragraphs. The second modification that was made to the RRL was the addition of the category "Clarifying." In the previous study, Yi recognized that her study was focused on rhetoric, not grammar. However, poor sentence structure and inappropriate vocabulary often results in unclear writing. Therefore, teachers recommended the category "Clarifying" to ensure students' writing is clear (Yi, 2010). The third and final modification made to the RRL was the addition of the "Cohesion" category. Although there is a category for unity, which is similar to cohesion, teachers in the original study suggested the addition of a cohesion category that focused on the entire paper. The cohesion category, therefore, was added to ensure that unity was met both within a paragraph ("unity") and throughout the entire paper ("cohesion"). All three of these modifications were made after careful consideration of the results and recommendations of Yi's original study.

Table 1

Rhetoric Revision Log

Rhetoric Revision Log

		Essay 1		Essay 2		Essay 3		Total
Area		1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	
Word	TRS							
	TRP							
	WC							
Sentence	TS							
	TH							
	CS							
	CL							
Paragraph	ORWP							
	OROP							
	UN							
Content	IR							
	SP							
	EX							
	RR							
	CO							
Draft								
Total Number								
Definitions: TRS – Transitions (sentences), TRP – Transitions (paragraphs), WC – Word Choice, TS – Topic Sentence, TH – Thesis Statement, CS – Concluding Sentence, CL – Clarifying, ORWP – Logical Order Within Paragraphs, OROP – Logical Order of Paragraphs (in paper), UN – Unity, IR – Irrelevant Information, SP – Adding Details (balancing <u>supporting points</u>), EX – Adding Details (<u>examples</u>), RR – Repetitive/Redundant, CO – Cohesion (unity)								

Participants and Pedagogical Setting

The participants that took part in this treatment group were students in three different ESL writing classes at Brigham Young University's English Language Center (ELC). There were three teachers involved in the treatment group. Due to extenuating circumstances, two of the teachers both taught the same class – one the first half of the semester, and the other the second half of the semester. It was decided that two teachers for this class would be acceptable for this study since both teachers followed the research protocol thoroughly. Although the argument can be made that their feedback could be different, the students and researcher found

the teachers' feedback to not differ greatly. The third teacher taught two classes using the RRL treatment.

The participants that took part in the control group were students in three different ESL writing classes, also at the ELC. There were three teachers involved in the control group, with one teacher per class.

The results of the study from the treatment group were compared to a control group. Both the treatment group and the control group wrote the same type of essays, took the same pre and posttest, and had the same number of writing conferences as the treatment group. However, the control group did not use the RRL; rather, feedback was given freely by the teachers without using any type coding method or log. Table 2 below shows the gender and first language of all students of both the treatment and the control group.

Table 2

Group Composition by Gender and First Language

L1	Treatment		Control		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Spanish	4	12	19	19	54
Chinese	3	1	2	1	7
Korean	2	3	1	0	6
Mongolian	0	3	0	1	4
Japanese	2	0	0	0	2
Portuguese	1	1	0	0	2
Russian	1	0	1	0	2
French	0	1	0	0	1
Kazakh	1	0	0	0	1
Thai	0	1	0	0	1
Total	14	22	23	21	80

Pretest and Posttest

All students involved in the study took a pretest and a posttest. The pretest for the study was the institution's placement test, which assessed students' English in the following areas:

reading, linguistic accuracy, speaking, listening, and writing. The test included a timed 30-minute essay for the writing portion, which was what was analyzed for the pretest results. The participating writing teachers graded these pretests with a standard rubric, the Writing Proficiency Rubric, used by all writing teachers at this level of the IEP. The Writing Proficiency Rubric, as seen in Appendix A, is a holistic rubric with an eight-point scale. The categories “Text Type,” “Content,” and “Accuracy” are all included on the rubric. “Text Type” refers to the length and organization of the writing. “Content” is the writer’s functional ability with the language, including vocabulary. Finally, “Accuracy” analyzes student’s grammar in the essay. The raters move from left (beginning with “Text Type”) to right (ending with “Accuracy”) when using the rubric.

For the results of the pretest, Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and shows that the control group received higher writing scores than the treatment group on the pretest, $t(78)=2.941$, $p=.004$, producing a moderate effect size, $d=.661$.

Table 3

Pretest Writing Scores

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	43	3.88	0.57
Treatment	37	3.51	0.54

The posttest for the study was the same test, and the 30-minute essay was graded with the same rubric. These pre and posttests were rated by a variety of raters; however, the raters underwent the same calibration training that involved practicing with writing samples. To ensure reliability, a post rating analysis using Rasch Modeling is used to determine a fair average. This fair average is an adjusted score based on rater tendencies, meaning that a rater’s generosity or severity is taken into account to determine the fair average.

The pre and posttests were quantitatively analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to determine if students improved in their writing over the semester. In addition, a repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare the treatment group's pre and posttest scores to the control group's pre and posttest scores. Although the 30-minute essay on the pre and posttests was not just focused on content in writing and included grammar, strong content was necessary for the students to perform well on these tests. In addition, the Writing Proficiency Rubric includes sections that analyze rhetorical aspects in writing. Therefore, the pre and posttest were used as a measurement instrument since rhetoric in writing is an imperative aspect to scores.

Written Essays and Writing Conferences

The treatment group wrote two drafts of three essays, using the RRL for each draft and essay. The classes had three different essays analyzed for feedback and improvement and all students participated in writing conferences with their teacher. Both the students and the teachers used the RRL with the first two drafts of each essay to keep track of rhetorical errors. Teachers used the codes on the RRL on students' essay to indicate rhetorical errors. Students would receive their essay draft back and their RRL, and they would tally the number of each code they had for the draft, with the goal of decreasing tallies from draft to draft, essay to essay. The procedure of tallying the codes was done in class to ensure that all students kept up with the tallying.

Surveys and Semi-Structured Interviews

The survey (see Appendix D), which is a modified version of Yi's (2010) survey, was distributed to students in the treatment group at the end of the semester. This survey consisted of five questions on a Likert scale, one question where students select the abbreviations they do not know, two yes/no questions, and one short response question. The Likert scale questions asked

students about how easy it is to understand the feedback using the RRL, how useful each of the categories were, how useful the log was with writing conferences, how strongly the student would recommend using the training packets in future writing classes, and how strongly the student would recommend using the RRL in future writing classes. The yes/no questions asked students if they reduced their errors over the semester with the use of the log and if they would be willing to be interviewed. The short response question asked students to describe one thing they would change to the RRL. In the original study, Yi had a different survey per treatment group, and none of the questions asked about specific abbreviations. In addition, this survey asked students to rank how useful each category was, whereas the survey in Yi's study did not.

In addition to surveys, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E) were conducted with a select number of students from the treatment group. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with all the teachers in the treatment group (see Appendix F). The interviews were less controlled than the surveys in order to allow more insight into teacher and student perspectives of the RRL. The interviews included pre-written questions that were more open-ended than the survey questions and focused on what areas of the log were useful, what areas can be improved and how they can be improved, and the feasibility of implementing the log. The teacher interviews also asked questions exploring the teachers' views of how the RRL helped teachers to balance feedback between rhetoric and linguistic accuracy. The interviews with both the teachers and students were conducted by the researcher. The interviews were recorded using a sound recording device, with IRB approval.

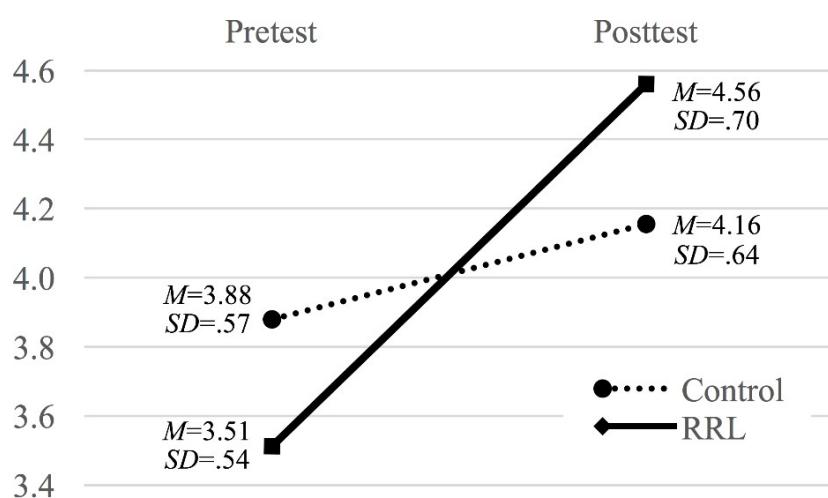
Results

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, “What is the effect of the RRL on student writing compared to the writing of students in a control group?” The results of a repeated measures ANOVA comparing the treatment with the control group across pretest and posttest writing scores showed a statistically significant group by time interaction, $F(1,78)=16.942$, $p<.001$, producing a large effect size ($\eta_p^2=.178$). These results are plotted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Plot of pre and posttest score for the treatment and control groups.



As noted earlier, the control group received a higher score on the pretest than the treatment group. The scores from the pretest to the posttest show that the RRL group made a significant gain from pretest to posttest. These data suggest a beneficial effect of the RRL on the overall quality of the writing compared to the control group.

Research Question 2

This second research question was designed to evaluate teacher perspectives of the RRL. In order to answer this question, all teachers who implemented the RRL in their ESL writing

classes were interviewed using open-ended interview questions, including the teachers of the classes whose results were not reported in this study¹. The questions covered the following topics: the teachers' general opinion of the RRL, any suggestions on how to improve the use of the RRL, the difficulty of providing feedback using the RRL, the effectiveness of the categories and abbreviations, and the use of the training packets given to inform the teachers and students on how the log works.

All teachers involved in the treatment group were interviewed at the end of their semester of using the RRL. There were many resounding statements that appeared throughout the interviews. The first was that the RRL was a helpful tool that benefitted both the teachers and students. All teachers had many positive comments to give about the RRL and recommended using the log in future writing classes.

Another insight that was shared by all three teachers was that there was a learning curve for both the teachers and students in using the log, which was to be expected, but once the students and teachers became familiar with the log the process went smoothly. However, there were two categories that the teachers felt the students either never learned or never fully understood: "unity" and "cohesion." One of the teachers suggested that the ability to distinguish the difference between unity and cohesion was a little above the students' level. She recommended explaining the difference more clearly. Another teacher suggested to either just have one of the categories or to explain the difference more clearly.

All of the teachers also shared the same opinion on the balance between grammar and content feedback. Every teacher felt that they could give more feedback on content more easily with this tool, which made it efficient for them to give feedback on content. The teachers felt they gave enough feedback on grammar when needed. However, one teacher suggested

incorporating some grammar symbols on the log that might go in hand with content.

Finally, the three teachers informed the researcher that the Essay Writing Rubric that was used alongside the RRL was confusing to use for all the essays (see Appendix B). One teacher suggested providing a different rubric per essay type so that the rubrics aligned more closely to the essays.

In addition to interviewing the three teachers involved in the treatment group, every teacher from the classes who used the RRL but whose results were not included in the reporting of this study were also interviewed. As described in the endnote, there were four classes who attempted to use the RRL but did not follow the research protocol completely and thoroughly. Certainly, these failed attempts showed the RRL is not perfect and is subject to human error. However, all five teachers of these six classes were interviewed about their views of the RRL. Despite research protocol not being completely followed, every teacher gave positive feedback on the RRL and recommended the RRL to be used in future writing courses. They all said using the RRL was manageable and helped them to provide more balance feedback between grammar and rhetoric. In addition to the positive feedback, many of the teachers also made the same recommendations on the clarifying or removing of the two categories “unity” and “cohesion,” which further proved these two categories to be problematic for students at the Intermediate High level.

The results of the teacher interviews showed that all teachers who used the RRL in their writing classes had overall positive views of the log, with some of the teachers explicitly stating that they would use the log again. Despite the log being subject to human error, the teachers’ perspectives of the log still suggest that the log can be a beneficial tool for teachers. These positive views of the RRL were similar to the positive responses teachers in the original study

gave in surveys of the RRL. However, it is interesting to note that the teachers in this second study found “unity” and “cohesion” to be a struggle for students, considering the fact that these categories were added to the study in response to teachers’ suggestions from the original study.

Research Question 3

This research question asked, “Are there categories on the Rhetoric Revision Log that are not effective for the Intermediate High level?” For this question, data from student surveys and teacher interviews were analyzed.

In student surveys, students were asked, “How useful is the feedback provided by each of the following categories of the Rhetoric Revision Log?” This question was asked to see if there were any categories that the students at this particular level found ineffective. The students’ responses were predominately “useful” or “very useful” for every category. Results of a one-way ANOVA comparing the usefulness of the various RRL categories was significant, $F(14,538)=2.089, p=.011$. Table 4 displays means and standard deviations. Although each of these ranged between *useful* and *very useful*, a post hoc comparison shows that only the difference between topic sentence (highest rating) and unity (lowest rating) was statistically significant, $p=.024$, generating a large effect size, $d=.836$.

Table 4

Usefulness of Rhetorical Categories

Category	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Topic Sentence	36	2.69	0.58
Thesis Statement	37	2.57	0.55
Word Choice	37	2.54	0.65
Concluding Sentence	37	2.54	0.73
Sentence Transitions	37	2.46	0.65
Paragraph Transitions	37	2.41	0.64
Examples	37	2.41	0.64
Balanced Support	36	2.36	0.72
Clarifying	37	2.32	0.71
Irrel. Information	37	2.30	0.70
ORWP	37	2.27	0.80
Cohesion	37	2.22	0.79
OROP	37	2.19	0.91
Rep Redundant	37	2.16	0.76
Unity	37	2.08	0.86

0=Not useful, 1=Somewhat Useful, 2=Useful

3=Very Useful

These results suggest that almost all categories on the RRL were viewed as efficient in providing feedback by a majority of students.

One question on the student survey asked, “Do you have any recommendations of categories on the log we can add, change, or clarify?” Several students responded saying that the abbreviations OROP (Logical Order of Paragraphs (in paper)) and ORWP (Logical Order Within Paragraphs) should be changed, and a few students claimed that a few more examples would help make the categories clearer. The feedback on the abbreviations for OROP and ORWP coincided with the feedback the teachers gave on the abbreviations. Teachers, in their interviews, also stated that “Cohesion” and “Unity” were confusing for students, which shows to be true in the student survey – the category with the highest number of students responding with “Not Useful” was “Unity,” with 9.52% percent of students claiming it was not useful. The data from

student surveys and input from teachers provide information that the category “Unity” and perhaps even “Cohesion” are not effective for students at the Intermediate High level, but that all other categories perform well at helping students decrease their content errors.

Discussion

Teacher interviews indicated that teachers find the Rhetoric Revision Log to be beneficial in providing feedback and improving rhetoric in students’ writing. Teacher interviews provided some feedback on how to improve the log, such as removing or clarifying “Unity” and/or “Cohesion.” Teacher interviews also showed that teachers believe the balance between grammar and rhetoric can exist with the use of the RRL.

Student surveys and interviews showed positive support for the log. Survey and interview results further supported the log, as a majority of students felt their writing improved with the use of the log. Furthermore, ANOVA data showed a significant improvement in writing from pretest to posttest with the use of the RRL in writing classes using the treatment. This data showed that the the higher writing score increases observed for the treatment group compared to the control group were statically significant.

The results of this study confirmed that teachers find the log manageable both in use and in balance of feedback. Results also showed that the RRL was overall successful in reducing student content errors in writing and that a majority of the log’s categories were beneficial for students of the Intermediate High level.

Limitations

One limitation in this study was the fact that there were two teachers teaching one class due to extenuating circumstances. Although the researchers felt it would be appropriate for a second teacher to take over the class after the first teacher had to leave, it is not ideal due to the

possible differences in feedback. One teacher teaching the same class throughout the entire semester would be the preferred method of instruction.

Another limitation, which could be inevitable, was the fact that a few of the students' logs were not filled out completely. Even when teachers provided time in class for students to fill out their logs when they received a draft back, some students' logs were missing some information. This could be due to the student not turning in a draft, the student being absent the day the class filled out their logs, the student being confused on the task at hand, or perhaps because the student simply did not want to fill out the log. Teacher monitoring is crucial in order to limit the number of students who have incomplete logs; however, this is bound to happen even with careful teacher monitoring.

Future Research

Future research could help improve the RRL even more. Thus far, the RRL has only been studied at one level. Studying the log at a variety of levels (perhaps with some adaptations for lower levels) may help determine if the log is beneficial for a wider population of ESL students. In addition, changing the log so "Unity" and "Cohesion" are either more distinguishable or combining those categories into one is a suggested improvement for the future use of the RRL in writing classes. Finally, improving some of the above-mentioned confusing abbreviations and seeing if that helps students further understand the feedback given with the log would be a valuable study to help improve the log.

Conclusion

This second study provided further evidence that the RRL, like most other learning logs, can be a useful tool for ESL students wanting to improve their writing. With the focus of the feedback being on rhetoric, teachers can ensure that their feedback does not focus predominately

on grammar. Although there is a focus on rhetoric, all teachers reported that grammar feedback was not ignored and that a balance can exist. Teachers found this tool provides a more efficient way to provide appropriate and clear feedback to rhetorical aspects of student writing.

The data from the pretest and posttest suggest that the RRL reduces error in students' writing production. Students decreased in rhetorical errors in their writing as they used this tool throughout the semester. This tool, therefore, serves its purpose of improving student writing. A majority of students found the tool to be useful and recommended it be used in future writing classes. With modifications made to some of the categories, as described above, the RRL can further succeed in improving rhetoric in student writing.

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Endnote

¹During the first semester the RRL was used, the protocol was not followed completely in one of the two classes in which it was researched. The teacher of the one class that did not follow protocol did not hold writing conferences with the students, which was a valuable aspect of the study. During the second semester the RRL was researched, the data was lost from one class and the RRL was not used for every draft of every paper in the second class. During the last semester the RRL was researched, the RRL was implemented in three classes: two classes taught by one teacher in which the log was used successfully, and one class taught by two teachers in which the data was excluded because of difference in the feedback practices of the two teachers. Therefore, the final results of this study consisted of three classes, all which used the RRL completely by following the research protocol discussed in this section. Thus, the data gathered from these three classes will more accurately depict the RRL's strengths and weaknesses.

Appendix A

BYU ELC – Writing Proficiency Rubric

	Text Type	Content	Accuracy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length • Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Ability • Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical Complexity • Meaning
6—AM	Multiple paragraph essays with clear organization.	Appropriately uses abstract and concrete language to convey meaning. Message is pragmatically accurate for easy reading. Attempts to use cohesive devices but they may be redundant. Wide and varied general and academic vocabulary and topics.	Able to use language in detail in all time frames. Control of syntax in word order, coordination, and subordination while not perfect, does not distract greatly from meaning. No or very few spelling problems. Evident use of a wide range of structures. May be a few errors with complex and infrequent grammatical structures.
5—AL	Multiple paragraphs with evidence of organizational markers on the essay level.	Able to meet all practical writing needs. Favors concrete ideas and some more abstract topics may be discussed but meaning is perhaps unclear. Vocabulary is quite varied, but not to the extent of level 6.	Able to use language in major time frames. There is apparent subordination, but it is more like oral discourse. Mastery of grammar with simple sentences. More complex sentences are attempted, but contain errors and may not be clear.
4—IH	Multiple paragraphs are present with organization on the paragraph level (topic sentence, supporting detail, etc.)—but perhaps not on the essay level.	Writing is usually in the context of personal interests and experiences, daily routines, common events, and immediate surroundings. Concrete topics are discussed. Some examples and explanations may not be clear. Some points may not be well supported or explained	Some mastery of past narration (past progressive, simple past, etc.) with both regular and irregular verbs. Inconsistencies occur in other time frames. The majority of sentences will be shorter. Complex sentences are common and generally accurate. Problems in accuracy may occur, and the overall meaning may occasionally be obscured.
3—IM	At least one formed paragraph (for 30-minute writing portion). Organization is weak with multiple paragraphs.	Able to meet some limited practical writing needs—writing about personal interests and experiences, daily routines, common events and immediate surroundings. Structure and meaning are highly predictable. Usually relating to personal information or immediate surroundings. Writing exhibits a small range of vocabulary.	Solid writing of short and simple conversational style sentences with basic subject-verb-object word order. Exhibits some consistent success with compound and complex sentences. Basic errors in grammar, word choice, punctuation and spelling. Most writing framed in the present. Some mastery of past narration in the simple past with regular verbs. Other time frames may be attempted with some success. However, natives used to the writing of non-natives can usually understand the meaning.
2—IL	Simple sentences; some compound and complex sentences with repetitive structure. Lacks clear paragraph organization.	Close, personal explanations with very limited vocabulary. Writers can express themselves within a very limited context.	Able to write clear simple and compound sentences with limited vocabulary and conjunctions. Attempt to create some compound sentences using connectors like “because.” Writing is successful in present tense, occasional and often incorrect use of past or future tenses. Text is writer-centered.
1—NH	Some simple sentences.	Reliance on formulaic/memorized language.	Exhibit accuracy when writing on well-practiced familiar topics using limited formulaic language. Sentence-level constructions. The volume of writing may be so small that it undermines the reader’s ability to evaluate accuracy, or errors occur so frequently that the purpose of the writing task may not be completely clear.

Appendix B

Content Revision Log

Grade Record

Essay	Draft	Topic	Grade (1-4)
Essay 1	1.1		
	1.2		
	1.3		
Essay 2	2.1		
	2.2		
	2.3		
Essay 3	3.1		
	3.2		
	3.3		

Content (Content Revision Sheet)

		Essay 1		Essay 2		Essay 3		Area Total Number
Area		1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	
Word	TRS							
	TRP							
	WC							
Sentence	TS							
	TH							
	CS							
	CL							
Paragraph	ORWP							
	OROP							
	UN							
Content	IR							
	SP							
	EX							
	RR							
	CO							
Draft Total Number								

Definitions: TRS – Transitions (sentences), TRP – Transitions (paragraphs), WC – Word Choice, TS – Topic Sentence, TH – Thesis Statement, CS – Concluding Sentence, CL – Clarifying, ORWP – Logical Order Within Paragraphs, OROP – Logical Order of Paragraphs (in paper), UN – Unity, IR – Irrelevant Information, SP – Adding Details (balancing supporting points), EX – Adding Details (examples), RR – Repetitive/Redundant, CO – Cohesion (unity)

Appendix C

Essay Writing Rubric

Name:				Date:
Topic				
1	2	3	4	<p>Requirements: Contains all notes, drafts and final draft.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Focus: Writer establishes the essay's central idea clearly and effectively in the opening paragraph and maintains this focus throughout the essay. Each paragraph is logically linked to the main idea and all sentences within the paragraphs serve to further develop and maintain this focus.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Argument: Writer makes a claim and explains why it is controversial, giving clear and accurate reasons in support of their claim.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Conventions: The essay's prose is written in grammatically correct English; the essay has no spelling or grammatical errors; it shows a sound understanding of the structure of a good sentence and paragraph.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Organization: The writer's ideas follow and relate to each other in a logical and effective way. Information is organized within the sentence and paragraph, as well as the paper itself, for maximum rhetorical effectiveness. The writer's ideas and topics within the essay are balanced.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Insight: The essay shows the writer has explored the subject in all of its complexity and reveals and examines the nature of that complexity. These insights should not be implied but revealed and developed through good examples from the texts.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Development: The writer uses specific, concrete, examples from the text to illustrate the ideas the essay develops. Examples are clearly cited.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Process: The writer submits evidence of revision, planning, and careful work. There is not evidence that work happened at the last minute. Writer has made full use of resources available including writing conferences, writing groups and tutors.</p>
1	2	3	4	<p>Benchmark: The writer demonstrates the quality of work expected in this class at this time on such an assignment.</p>
Grade:				Comments:

Appendix D

Student Survey

1. How easy is it to understand feedback using the Rhetoric Revision Log?
 - a. Easy
 - b. Somewhat easy
 - c. Somewhat hard
 - d. Hard

2. How useful is the feedback provided by each of the following categories of the Rhetoric Revision Log?

Category	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Transitions (sentences) (TRS)				
Transitions (paragraphs) (TRP)				
Word Choice (WC)				
Topic Sentence (TS)				
Thesis Statement (TH)				
Concluding Sentence (CS)				
Clarifying (CL)				
Logical Order Within Paragraphs (ORWP)				
Logical Order of Paragraphs (in paper) (OPOP)				
Unity (UN)				
Irrelevant Information (IR)				
Adding Details (balancing supporting points) (SP)				
Adding Details (examples) (EX)				
Repetitive/Redundant (RR)				
Cohesion (unity) (CO)				

3. Please select the abbreviations you do not know.

TRS – Transition (sentences)	
TRP – Transitions (paragraphs)	
WC – Word Choice	
TS – Topic Sentence	
TH – Thesis Statement	
CS – Concluding Sentence	
CL – Clarifying	
ORWP – Logical Order Within Paragraphs	
OROP – Logical Order of Paragraphs (in paper)	
UN – Unity	
IR – Irrelevant Information	
SP – Adding Details (balancing supporting points)	
EX – Adding Details (examples)	
RR – Repetitive/Redundant	
CO – Cohesion (unity)	

4. As the semester progressed, did you reduce the number of needed revisions by using the log?
- Yes
 - No (Please explain more about why you feel you did not reduce the number of revisions needed by using the log.)
5. After you received written feedback, how helpful was using the Rhetoric Revision Log in the conferences you had with your teacher?
- Not very useful
 - Somewhat useful
 - Useful
 - Very Useful
6. How strongly would you recommend future writing teachers use the training packet for future classes with similar students?
- Strongly
 - Somewhat strongly
 - Not Strongly
7. How strongly would you recommend future writing teachers use the Rhetoric Revision Log for future classes with similar students?
- Strongly
 - Somewhat strongly
 - Not Strongly

8. What is one thing you would change to the Rhetoric Revision Log?
9. I'm looking to find out a little more from students about their experiences using the Rhetoric Revision Log. Would you be willing to talk with me about your experiences for about 5-10 minutes? I'll be meeting with students before the end of the semester next week; would you have time to chat with me then?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Appendix E

Student Interview Questions

1. Give your general opinions about the log.
2. Do you have any general suggestions on how to improve the log? If so, what suggestions do you have?
3. Is it easy to understand feedback using the Rhetoric Revision Log? Why or why not?
4. Do the categories on the Revision Log like "Thesis Statement" or "Clarifying" provide useful feedback? Why or why not?
5. Do you have any recommendations of categories we can add, change, or clarify?
6. Are the abbreviations easy to understand? (e.g. WC for "Word Choice") Why or why not?
7. Are there any abbreviations that need improving? If so, which ones and why?
8. Are these three categories of the log helpful for you: "Concluding Sentences," "Coherency," and "Clarifying"? Why or why not?
9. As the semester progressed, did you reduce the number of needed revisions by using the Revision Log? Why or why not?
10. Was it helpful to use the Rhetoric Revision Log during writing conferences? Why or why not?
11. Do you have any general suggestions on how to improve the use of the log with writing conferences? If so, what suggestions do you have?
12. Were the training packets helpful for you? Please explain your response.

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Please give your general opinion of the Rhetoric Revision Log.
2. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the log? If so, what suggestions do you have?
3. Is it easy to provide feedback using the Rhetoric Revision Log? Why or why not?
4. Is the log easy to use? If not, do you have any suggestions on how to improve the log so that it is easy to use?
5. Are the categories useful for Academic Prep students? (e.g. WC for "Word Choice") Why or why not?
6. Do you have any recommendations of categories on the Revision Log we can add, change, or clarify?
7. Are the abbreviations easy to understand? (e.g. WC for "Word Choice") Why or why not?
8. Are there any abbreviations that need improving? If so, which ones and why?
9. Are the categories "concluding sentence," "coherency," and "clarifying" helpful for students? Why or why not?
10. As the semester progressed, did your students reduce the number of needed revisions by using the log? Why or why not?
11. Was it helpful to use the content revision log during writing conferences with your students? Why or why not?
12. Do you have any general suggestions on how to improve the use of the log with writing conferences? If so, what suggestions do you have?
13. Were the training packets helpful for you? Please explain your response.
14. Do you think your feedback has proper balance between content and grammar with the use of the Rhetoric Revision Log? Why or why not?