THE CORRELATION BETWEEN COLLEGE STUDENTS' REACTIONS TO TEACHER COMMENTARY AND THE WRITING PROFICIENCY IN AN EFL CONTEXT

Ming-Tzu Liao

ABSTRACT

This study examined EFL students' perceptions and preferences for teacher commentary and the relationship between their perceptions and their improvement in writing proficiency. The participants included 119 Taiwanese English majors enrolled in English composition courses in universities across Taiwan. A written survey and interviews were administered and students' essays were collected, and were analyzed by SPSS, the coding scheme, and text analysis, respectively. The findings showed that the students strongly believed that teachers should comment on most aspects of their writing on both early and later drafts, and that comments on most aspects were helpful. By means of revisions, the students improved their overall writing performance and performance in each macro- and micro-level aspects of writing. More importantly, a high positive relationship was found between the students' perceptions of global-level comments and their writing proficiency/improvement whereas little relationship was found between the students' perceptions of local-level comments and their writing proficiency/improvement. The students' perceptions of macro-level comments were therefore more important and should inform teachers' response practices more than their preferences for micro-level comments. This study suggests that teachers should foster and encourage students' positive perceptions of and interest in the macro-level comments to help them learn to write effectively.

Key Words: teacher comments, student reactions, foreign language writing,
            writing performance

With scholars and practitioners' advocacy of process approaches in writing classrooms, composition instruction has transformed from

form-focused to process-focused, reader-based, and social-oriented pedagogy. One of the important aspects of writing pedagogy centers on teachers' written comments, which has provoked constant discussions because of the incomprehensive and inconclusive empirical studies on this matter, few common agreements reached regarding effective teacher commentary, and only a few constructive suggestions derived from the studies. Teacher commentary plays an important role in composition for the disciplines of L1 and L2 because it serves as a crucial means by which students assess their writing improvement. Unfortunately, most studies on teacher commentary indicate that commentary is problematic or ineffective (Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Leki, 1990; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985; Ziv, 1982), as demonstrated by the minimal improvement of the texts or deterioration of the students' writing skills.

Corresponding with the features of teacher comments, students' revision approaches in response to teacher comments appear to be ineffective, vague, rigid, form-oriented, or lack focus. Their revision approaches vary. Some of them delete problematic texts to avoid revision (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Dohrer, 1991; Hyland, 1998; Ziv, 1982); some exactly follow teachers' directions (Chapin and Terdal, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Sperling & Freedman, 1987); some completely rewrite rather than revise texts (Hyland, 1998); some ignore their ideas and focus on eradicating errors (Dohrer, 1991); some pay little attention to teacher comments (Saito, 1994), and even though some revise their texts, still many of them misinterpret teacher comments (Ashwell, 2000; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Without knowing the reasons for the errors, students tended to make the same errors repeatedly in the subsequent papers (Ziv, 1984). It appears that the effects of teacher comments on students' revisions are less successful than what teachers desired, and that teacher comments have not helped students learn rhetorical strategies for refining their ideas and focus.

L2/FL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR AND REACTIONS TO TEACHER COMMENTARY

In general, L2/FL students expect and value teachers' comments, regard them as helpful, and pay great amount of attention to them (Arndt, 1993; Bearse, 2003; Brice, 1995, 1998; Brice & Newman, 2000; Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Chapin & Terdal, 1990; Cohen, 1987;

Crawford, 1992; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland, 1998; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994). They especially view the explicit, text-specific, detailed and personal comments as very useful and crucial in helping improve their writing abilities and favor them more than the general comments (Brice, 1995, 1998; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Straub, 1997). In addition, students regard teachers' praise as crucial or motivating to their revisions (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998; Straub, 1997), especially the one which specifically points out and explains the strengths of their writing (Straub, 1997).

For L2 students, revision entails error correction and addressing language concerns (Ashwell, 2000; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996), and teachers' error correction/identification is viewed as more helpful than the other types of teacher responses (Saito, 1994). L2 students want to have their teachers correct/identify all of their grammatical errors and regard teachers as graders, editors, and grammar professionals (Crawford, 1992; Dohrer, 1991; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988).

Students did not like teacher comments on the content of their papers and reported that such commentary did not help improve their writing, whereas comments on development and organization, and error identification did help them improve. In addition, the students who were more receptive to teachers' feedback were more willing to take responsibility in correcting their errors than those who refused to accept the feedback (Radecki & Swales, 1988).

On the other hand, other L2 students respond to the teacher's global- and local-level comments. They not only care for teacher's comments on their local-level problems, but desire comments on global-level issues. Leki (1991) reported that although many ESL students claimed they attended to teacher comments on errors of their writing, many more ESL students attended to the comments on organization and ideas. However, when comments on ideas and organization were provided without any error correction, they were not easily acceptable to the students (Leki, 1991). Based on students' reports, Ferris (1995) found that they attended most to comments on grammar, content, and organization, in descending order, on early drafts, and they attended most to comments on grammar, mechanics, and content/organization, in descending order, on final drafts. Their responses to teacher comments on the respective early and later drafts differed significantly (Ferris, 1995). What is more, a later study showed that L2 students expected teacher's macro-level comments on

content and organization and viewed those comments as more crucial than the micro-level comments. They desired teacher's response summary of the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and the specific suggestions (Brice, 1998).

Students' attitudes toward teacher feedback were directly influenced by their teachers (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996). ESL students viewed most features of teacher comments helpful and regarded comments on organization, style, and grammar essential, whereas the FL students viewed comments on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics important. The ESL students reported that meaning-related concerns such as content and organization were more often addressed than language issues in their teachers' feedback, but FL students reported that form concerns were more often addressed than content concerns. Correspondingly, the ESL students paid much more attention to content and organization than to language use, vocabulary, and mechanics; on the contrary, FL students focused much more on linguistic accuracy than on content and organization (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996). Also, when teachers had every error identified or corrected, students strongly desired the corrections (Leki, 1991). Students' views toward the importance of error correction reflect their teachers' response method (Leki, 1991; Truscott, 1999). In sum, the above sections show most L2/FL students value teacher comments although their expectations and preferences for teacher comments vary and are sometimes contrary to one another.

In addition, students have difficulty in interpreting the purposes of teachers' comments (Chapin & Terdal, 1990; Crawford, 1992) or incorporating the comments (Goldstein & Kohls, 2002). The reason could be that the intention or the strategies and procedures for revision were not clearly conveyed (Chapin & Terdal, 1990); examples and explanations were not provided in the comments (Cohen, 1987), or indirect commenting strategies were used by teachers (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Teachers should therefore explicitly communicate their purposes and methods of responses to students (Crawford, 1992).

Because of the intensive curriculum, which is more teaching- than learning-oriented, exam- than process-focused, and of which evaluation is more summative than formative, individual conferencing and peer response activities are not commonly implemented in the English composition class. Also, few writing centers have been established in universities across Taiwan. In addition, the students learn English in a

less authentic language environment, and have less rich exposures to English than ESL students. Therefore, teacher commentary may play a significant role. Further, most students who attend universities are still novice writers in English, and their composition teachers' feedback is usually the primary source to help them revise. Their perceptions of revision might be profoundly affected by the teachers' views and behavior in responding. Especially Taiwanese culture, which respects teachers and values their teachings, would influence the students' perceptions of teacher feedback and approaches for integrating it.

To help students effectively incorporate teacher comments, it is important to know students' needs, problems, and reactions to teacher comments. As Pratt's (1999) study revealed, students' attitudes toward teacher responses affected the ways the students incorporated and handled the responses. Students' reactions, although often being neglected, can play a significant role in their revision processes. Although many studies have focused on students' attitudes toward the comments or their behaviors in incorporating the comments to revise, few researchers have examined the effects of teacher comments on students' writing proficiency, and the relationship between students' attitudes and their measurable improvement in writing skills. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions and reactions to teacher comments?
   A. To what extent do the students believe that teachers should comment on specific aspects of their writing and that teacher comments on specific aspects of their writing help them learn to write the best?
   B. What types of comments on preliminary and later drafts, respectively, do the students regard as the most and least helpful in developing their writing skills?
2. To what extent do students enhance their overall writing proficiency and the proficiency in content, development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary through revision?
3. Is there any difference in students' perceptions of the comments across drafts and levels?
4. Is there any correlation between students' perceptions of teacher comments and their overall writing proficiency?
   A. Do the students who claim greatly improving their writing from global-level comments actually score high on their

essays?

    B. Do the students who report greatly developing their writing skills from local-level comments indeed score high on their essays?

5. Is there any correlation between the students' perceptions of teacher comments and the improvement in their writing performance?

    A. Do the students who claim greatly improving their writing from global-level comments actually progress in their writing proficiency?

    B. Do the students who report greatly developing their writing skills from local-level comments indeed improve their writing performance?

6. Is there any correlation between students' views of teacher comments and the improvement in the corresponding aspects of writing proficiency?

    A. Do the students who claim greatly benefiting from global-level comments actually progress in the global-level aspects of their writing proficiency?

    B. Do the students who report greatly developing their writing skills from local- level comments indeed improve the forms of their essays?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

One hundred twenty-six English majors of four different national universities in Taiwan volunteered to participate in the study. The students were taking one of the three levels of English composition courses required in the departments: basic, intermediate, or advanced. The participants shared similar cultural and language backgrounds: Chinese was their L1, and English had been taught as a foreign language since they were in junior high. Their age range was 18-21, and the mean of their ages was 20. Ultimately, 119 students turned in the questionnaires. The return rate was 94.4 percent. The 119 participants who completed the study included 33 freshmen, 42 sophomores, and 44 juniors. Ninety-three of them were females, and 26 were males.

In general, four major assignments were assigned to the students in the semester. The students were required to submit at least two drafts for

each assignment. The genres of the assignments were similar across groups of the students.

Materials and Data

The attitude questionnaire consists of the demographic data, 38 statements which are rated in terms of the Likert-scale points, and 13 open-ended questions. The interview includes 10 open-ended questions. The essays rating form, adapted from Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), includes five categories of scoring criteria: content, idea development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. For each category, there are scores using a scale (4, 3, 2, and 1), and the respective features for each score (see Appendix). Raters could check the boxes next to the scores which best described the students' performance. In addition, the informed consent forms for the students were distributed and signed.

The data collected included questionnaires, interviews, students' preliminary and final drafts which were later coded by the researcher, the drafts with teachers' comments, and essay scores rated by independent raters.

Procedures

The survey was administered after class. The students were allowed to respond to the open-ended questions in Chinese to clearly express their ideas. Each participant took about 35 minutes to complete the written questionnaire. After the survey, twelve students (4 from each level) were chosen to participate in the interviews based on their answers to the survey questions and were permitted to answer the interview questions in Chinese. Also, the students' preliminary and final drafts were collected for later coding and analysis.

To measure the students' writing proficiency, three raters were hired to analytically rate the preliminary and later drafts of student essays. Before the rating, a norming session was conducted. In addition, an essay rating form with criteria was attached to each coded essay. The raters were asked to check the scores on the scale of the rating forms. Each of the raters individually scored all of the student essays (119 first and 119 final drafts, a total of 238 drafts). The average interrater reliability was .87. The students' writing proficiency was presented by the average essay scores among the raters.

Analysis of quantitative data is stated as follows. The frequencies,

means, standard deviations, *t*-tests, two-way ANOVA with repeated measures, were employed to measure the students' reactions which were presented by the points on the Likert-scale (variable A), and their writing proficiency which was indicated by the essays scores (variable B). The Pearson correlation coefficient was then used to measure the relationship between those two variables. The statistical procedures were run through SAS and SPSS. To reduce the chance of the Type I error, the alpha level was adjusted from .05 to .01. In addition, answers to open-ended questions were tallied and summarized, and reported by frequency and percentage.

In terms of the analysis of interviews, selected written transcripts from the interviews were translated from Chinese into English. Then the translated transcripts were coded and analyzed using the coding scheme which was adapted from Brice (1998). I worked with an independent rater to code all the selected transcripts. One code was applied per episodic unit; two codes were applied when a unit fitted into two categories. The agreement rate between the raters was .81. After coding, I categorized the data and pasted them under the corresponded headings to sheets of papers. Units with two codes were placed under two headings. Finally, I generalized results for the research question. In addition, data which could be used as examples were selected.

RESULTS

Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Comments

According to Table 1, most means are 4 and above, except for means on items 9, 21, 11, and 23. The students believed that teachers should comment on almost every aspect of their writing, as indicated by the means on items 4-27, except for correcting errors (items 9 and 21) and using correction symbols (items 11 and 23). There were very few aspects that the students thought the teachers were not responsible for commenting on. Specifically, on early drafts, the students strongly believed that teachers should comment on organization, idea development, writing style, and vocabulary, as illustrated by the means of 5.53, 5.50, 5.20, and 4.89, respectively. On later drafts, they strongly believed that the teachers should comments on vocabulary, organization, grammar (error identification), mechanics, style, and development, as illustrated by the means of 5.20, 4.50, 4.45, 4.39, 4.35, and 4.34, respectively.

Table 1.   Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Reactions

Questions	M	SD
1. I am interested in the writing tasks I work on.	4.27	1.03
2. I am developing English writing skills.	4.82	.89
3. I think that I am a proficient EFL writer.	3.13	1.06
4. T should comment on content and idea development: early draft.	5.50	.62
5. T should provide suggestions on organization: early draft.	5.53	.58
6. T should respond to writing style: early draft.	5.20	.87
7. T should make suggestions on word choice: early draft.	4.89	.90
8. T should identify grammatical errors indirectly: early draft.	4.24	1.10
9. T should correct my grammatical errors directly: early draft.	3.60	1.27
10. T should correct mechanics: early draft.	4.05	1.09
11. T should use correction symbols: early draft.	2.95	1.21
12. T should comment on my strengths: early draft.	4.50	.87
13. T should comment on my weaknesses: early draft.	5.45	.66
14. T should focus on ideas that I intended to express: early draft.	5.23	.71
15. T should comment based on the criteria: early draft.	4.13	.99
16. T should comment on content and idea development: later draft.	4.34	.98
17. T should provide suggestions on organization: later draft.	4.50	1.00
18. T should respond to my writing style: later draft.	4.35	.98
19. T should make suggestions on choice of vocabulary: later draft.	5.20	.92
20. T should identify grammatical errors indirectly: later draft.	4.45	1.16
21. T should correct my grammatical errors directly: later draft.	3.78	1.38
22. T should correct mechanics: later draft.	4.39	1.15
23. T should use correction symbols: later draft.	3.05	1.02
24. T should comment on my strengths: later draft.	4.50	.84
25. T should comment on my weaknesses: later draft.	5.31	.70
26. T should focus on ideas that I intended to express: later draft.	4.77	1.01
27. T should comment based on the criteria: later draft.	4.39	1.02
28. I learn the most when T comments on ideas and their development.	5.33	.75
29. I learn the most when T comments on organization.	5.47	.66
30. I learn the most when T responds to writing style.	5.04	.76
31. I learn the most when T comments on word choice.	4.99	.95
32. I learn the most when T identifies/corrects grammar errors.	4.46	.80
33. I learn the most when T corrects mechanics.	4.25	.90
34. I learn the most when T uses correction symbols.	2.85	1.02
35. I learn the most when T comments on my strengths.	4.19	.89
36. I learn the most when T comments on my weaknesses.	5.41	.68
37. I learn the most when T focuses on my intended ideas.	5.03	.84
38. I learn the most when T comments based on the standards.	3.94	1.09

Note. Scale: 6= Strongly Agree; 5= Agree; 4= Somewhat Agree; 3= Somewhat Disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly Disagree

Most means on items 28-38 are 4 and above, except for the mean on item 34—commentary using correction symbols. Overall, the students considered that teacher commentary on most aspects of their writing helped them learn to write and improve writing, as shown by the means on items 28-38. The students strongly felt that they learned the most when teachers commented on organization, idea development, style, and vocabulary, as manifested by the means of 5.47, 5.33, 5.04, and 4.99, respectively.

However, most of the students apparently found teachers' correction symbols on both early ($M = 2.95$) and later drafts ($M = 3.05$) unhelpful in promoting their learning. Additionally, although the students agreed that their teachers should offer comments on their strengths in early ($M = 4.50$) and later drafts ($M = 4.50$), they strongly agreed that teachers should provide suggestions on their weaknesses ($M = 5.45$ and 5.31 on early and later drafts, respectively). Overall, even though they considered that they learned from praise ($M = 4.19$), they strongly believed that they learned from critical suggestions ($M = 5.41$).

Students' Writing Proficiency

Holistic analysis of essay scores

Table 2 and 3 present the students' essay scores of respectively the early and later drafts. Table 2 indicates the early- and later-draft means and standard deviations for the possible effects of the teacher comments on the students' writing performance. The mean increases from 12.64 of the early drafts to 14.19 of the later drafts, a mean difference of 1.55, indicating that an average gain of 1.55 points is found on the later drafts (the sum is 20).

Table 2.   Means and Standard Deviations of the Essay Scores by Drafting Sequence

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	*M*	*SD*	*SE*
Early drafts	119	7	18	12.64	2.59	.24
Later drafts	119	7	20	14.19	2.45	.22

Note. Possible essay score: 4x5= 20

Further, a *t*-test was chosen to examine the extent of the mean difference between the early and later drafts. As can be seen in Table 3,

the mean difference of 1.55 between the early and later drafting sequences is significant ($p < .01$), which indicates that the students significantly improved the writing proficiency through the revision.

Table 3. T-Test: Paired Samples Test of Students' Essay Scores

	Paired Differences			*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	*SD*	*SE*			
Pair 1 Score on early draft - Score on later drafts	-1.55	2.07	.19	-8.149	118	.000**

Note. **$p < .01$

Analytic analysis of essay scores

The analysis of the students' analytical scores is presented in Tables 4 and 5. Table 6 indicates that although the mean difference varies from aspect to aspect, the gains in means of every aspect, including content, idea development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary, of the students' later drafts are significant ($p < .01$). The results suggest that the students significantly improved content, idea development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary on their later drafts.

Table 4. T-Test: Paired Samples Test of Students' Analytical Scores

		Paired Differences			*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
		M	*SD*	*SE*			
Pair 1	Content (early draft) - Content (later draft)	-.25	.67	.061	-4.125	118	.000**
Pair 2	Development (early draft) - Development (later draft)	-.29	.68	.062	-4.595	118	.000**
Pair 3	Organization (early draft) - Organization (later draft)	-.60	.78	.072	-8.295	118	.000**
Pair 4	Grammar (early draft) - Grammar (later draft)	-.23	.63	.058	-3.927	118	.000**
Pair 5	Vocabulary (early draft) - Vocabulary (later draft)	-.18	.55	.051	-3.655	118	.000**

Note. **$p < .01$

Further, as shown in Table 5, on the early drafts, the mean on organization (2.21) is apparently lower than the means on content (2.61),

idea development (2.53), grammar (2.61) and vocabulary (2.68), which suggests that the students' abilities in organizing their essays and using cohesive devices were apparently weaker than their proficiency in content, development, grammar, and vocabulary. However, on the later drafts, the mean on organization (2.81) is very close to the means on content (2.87), idea development (2.82), grammar (2.83), and vocabulary (2.87). Also, the mean difference of the scores on organization between the early and later drafts (.60) is the greatest. As a result, among the aspects of the essays assessed, the students improved the most in organization.

Table 5.   Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Analytical Scores by Drafting Sequence

		N	*M*	*SD*	*SE*
Pair 1	Content (early draft)	119	2.61	.69	.063
	Content (later draft)	119	2.87	.69	.063
Pair 2	Development (early draft)	119	2.53	.78	.071
	Development (later draft)	119	2.82	.66	.061
Pair 3	Organization (early draft)	119	2.21	.89	.082
	Organization (later draft)	119	2.81	.72	.066
Pair 4	Grammar (early draft)	119	2.61	.56	.051
	Grammar (later draft)	119	2.83	.51	.047
Pair 5	Vocabulary (early draft)	119	2.68	.54	.049
	Vocabulary (later draft)	119	2.87	.49	.045

Note. Possible analytical score: 4

Students' Reactions to Teachers' Comments Across Levels

This section (a series of Table 6) reports the students' perceptions of the teachers' comments across the students' course levels and the interaction of their levels and the drafting stages. Only the significant results are included and discussed in the section.

Table 6A1 focuses on the students' attitudes toward the teachers' comments on global-level issues, analyzed with *two-way ANOVA*. As shown in the table, the interaction between the student level and draft is significant ($p = .0025 < .01$), indicating that the differences in reactions across drafts vary across the student levels. Table 6A2 further indicates that the mean differences across drafts of 1.76, 3.40, and 3.66 for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, respectively, are different from level to level. On the later drafts, the mean of the freshmen (14.48) is higher

than the means of the sophomores (12.79) and the juniors (12.61), suggesting that the degree to which the freshmen believed that teachers should comment on the global-level comments was stronger than the sophomores' and juniors' ($p < .01$).

Table 6A1.   Two-Way ANOVA on Students' Reactions to Teacher Comments on Global-Level Issues

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Level	2	38.59	19.30	4.30	.0157
Draft	1	550.61	550.61	180.92	< .0001**
Level*Draft	2	38.36	19.18	6.30	.0025**

Note. **$p < .01$

Table 6A2.   Interaction of Students' Course Level and Drafting Sequence

Level of LEVEL	Level of DRAFT	N	Reactions	
			M	SD
1	1 (early)	33	16.24	1.06
1	2 (later)	33	14.48	2.17
2	1 (early)	42	16.19	1.47
2	2 (later)	42	12.79	2.60
3	1 (early)	44	16.27	1.50
3	2 (later)	44	12.61	2.28

Table 6B1 presents a significant difference in the students' attitudes toward teachers' identification of grammatical errors on their essays across their course levels ($p < .0001$). The mean (3.35) for the freshman level is obviously lower than the mean for the sophomore (4.75) or junior (4.72) level (see Table 6B2), which suggests that the sophomores and juniors regarded the teachers' error identification as much more necessary and useful than the freshmen did.

Table 6B1.   Two-Way ANOVA on Students' Reactions to Teachers' Identification of Errors

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Level	2	91.42	45.71	38.11	< .0001**
Draft	1	2.63	2.63	4.39	.0384
Level*Draft	2	1.44	.72	1.21	.3034

Note. **$p < .01$

Table 6B2. Students' Reactions to Teachers' Identification of
Grammatical Errors across Levels

Level of LEVEL	N	Reactions	
		M	*SD*
1	66	3.35	1.25
2	84	4.75	.89
3	88	4.72	.73

As shown in Table 6C1, the students' attitudes toward teachers' correction of grammatical errors on their essays also vary significantly across their course levels ($p < .0001$). However, referring to 6C2, the mean (4.70) for the freshman level is significantly higher than the mean for the sophomore (3.45) or junior (3.16) level, which means that the freshmen expressed stronger needs and higher interest in the teachers' error correction than did the sophomores and juniors.

Table 6C1. Two-Way ANOVA on Students' Reactions to Teachers'
Correction of Errors

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Level	2	96.47	48.23	20.92	< .0001**
Draft	1	2.03	2.03	4.80	.0304
Level*Draft	2	1.83	.92	2.16	.1196

Note. **$p < .01$

Table 6C2. Students' Reactions to Teachers' Correction of
Grammatical Errors across Levels

Level of LEVEL	N	Reactions	
		M	*SD*
1	66	4.70	1.34
2	84	3.45	1.27
3	88	3.16	.90

The Correlations Between Students' Perceptions and Overall Writing Proficiency

Tables 7 and 8 mainly focus on the correlations between the students' reactions to teachers' global- versus local-level comments,

respectively, and their overall writing proficiency (proficiency of content, idea development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary).

In Table 7, a high positive correlation ($r = .75$; $p < .01$) is found between the students' perceptions of macro-level comments and quality of their writing. The significant positive relationship suggests that generally, highly positive perceptions of the global-level comments were associated with high quality of writing skills and vice versa. The students who claimed greatly improving their writing from global-level comments actually scored high on their essays and vice versa. Further, $r = .75$; $r^2 = .56$, which means that 56 percent of the variance in the students' writing performance could be associated with the variance in the students' perceptions of teachers' global-level comments, whereas the rest could be related to factors other than the students' perspective, such as diligence, intelligence, length of learning English writing, motivation, interests, and self-esteem.

Table 7. Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Global-Level Comments and Writing Proficiency

	Reactions to Global Comments (*n*= 119)	Scores on the Later (Final) Draft (*n*= 119)
Reactions to Global Comments (*n* = 119)	1.000	.748**
Scores on the Later (Final) Draft (*n* = 119)	.748**	1.000

Note. **$p < .01$

However, Table 8 reveals that the correlation between the students' perceptions of micro-level comments and level of their writing skills is insignificant ($r = .04$; $p = .691 > .01$). The very little relationship suggests that highly positive perceptions of the micro-level comments are seldom associated with high level of writing proficiency and vice versa. The students who reported greatly developing their writing skills from micro-level comments did not necessarily score high on their essays and vice versa. Since $r = .04$, $r^2 = .002$. It means that only .2 percent of the variance in the students' writing proficiency could be related to the variance in the students' perceptions of teachers' local-level comments.

Table 8.   Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Local-Level
           Comments and Writing Proficiency

	Reactions to Local Comments (*n* = 119)	Scores on the Later (Final) Draft (*n* = 119)
Reactions to Local Comments (*n* = 119)	1.000	.370
Scores on the Later (Final) Draft (*n* = 119)	.370	1.000

The Correlations Between Students' Reactions and Advance in the Writing Proficiency

Table 9 indicates a significant, positive relationship between the students' perceptions of global-level comments and their improvement in overall writing performance ($r = .77$; $p < .01$). The students who claimed greatly improving their writing from global-level comments indeed progressed in their writing proficiency and vice versa. The $r^2 = .59$, which suggests that 59 percent of the variance in the progress of the students' writing performance could be associated with the variance in the students' perspective on teachers' macro-level comments.

Table 9.   Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Global-Level
           Comments and Improvement in Writing Proficiency

	Reactions to Global Comments (*n* = 119)	Later-Draft Scores - Early-Draft Scores (*n* = 119)
Reactions to Global Comments (*n* = 119)	1.000	.769**
Later-Draft Scores – Early-Draft Scores (*n* = 119)	.769**	1.000

Note. **$p < .01$

As can be seen in Table 10, the correlation coefficient between the students' perceptions of local-level comments and their improvement in the writing proficiency indicates little relationship ($r = .24$; $p = .008 < .01$). The students who reported greatly developing their writing skills

from local-level comments did not necessarily advance their writing proficiency and vice versa. The $r^2 = .06$, which indicates that 6 percent of the variance in the enhancement of the students' writing proficiency could be associated with the variance in the students' perceptions of teachers' micro-level comments.

Table 10.   Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Local-Level Comments and Improvement in Writing Proficiency

	Reactions to Local Comments ($n= 119$)	Later-Draft Scores - Early-Draft Scores ($n= 119$)
Reactions to Local Comments ($n = 119$)	1.000	.242
Later-Draft Scores – Early-Draft Scores ($n = 119$)	.242	1.000

The Correlations Between Students' Reactions and Enhancement in the Corresponding Writing Proficiency

In Table 11, a moderate positive relationship is found between the students' perceptions of global-level commentary and the increase in their essays scores in content, development, and organization ($r = .67$; $p < .01$). The students who claimed greatly benefiting from global-level comments progressed in the global-level aspects of writing proficiency and vice versa. Also, 45 percent of the variance ($r^2 = .45$) in the enhancement of the students' writing performance in content, idea development, and organization could be connected with the variance in the students' perspective on teachers' global-level comments.

The correlations between the students' perceptions of teachers' local-level commentary and improvement of their writing performance in grammar and vocabulary is shown in Table 12. The correlation coefficient of .18 indicates little relationship between those two variables ($r = .18$; $p = .055 > .01$). The students who reported greatly developing their writing skills from local-level comments did not necessarily improve in these aspects of their essays and vice versa. Only 3 percent ($r = .18$; $r^2 = .03$) of the variance in the increase of the students' writing proficiency in grammar and vocabulary could be related to the variance in the students' perceptions of teachers' micro-level comments.

Table 11. Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Global-Level Comments and Enhancement in Writing Proficiency in Content, Development, and Organization

	Reactions to Global Comments (*n*= 119)	**Score Increase on Con. Dev. & Org. (*n*= 119)**
Reactions to Global Comments (*n* = 119)	1.000	.668**
Score Increase on Con. Dev. & Org. (*n* = 119)	.668**	1.000

Note. **p < .01

Table 12. Correlations of Students' Reactions to the Local-Level Comments and Enhancement in Writing Proficiency in Grammar and Vocabulary

	Reactions to Local Comments (*n*= 119)	**Score Increase on Gra. & Vocab. (*n*= 119)**
Reactions to Local Comments (*n* = 119)	1.000	.176
Score Increase on Gra. & Vocab. (*n* = 119)	.176	1.000

Results of Open-Ended Questions and Interviews

Students' perceptions of teachers' comments

When being asked about types of comments they believed to be the most helpful to advance their writing proficiency, 113 students chose comments on organization; 87 students chose comments on content, style, and/or vocabulary, and 64 students chose comments on grammar. Even on the later drafts, the students asked for rhetorical-level comments, especially the ones on organization, which were more needed than those on content. They claimed that the suggestions on ideas would be less effective and relevant on the later drafts because they seldom changed the thesis or content on those drafts.

The constructive commentary on organization, unity, and coherence was considered by 113 students as the most important and helpful one. For example, one student wrote, "Suggestions on unity of the writing are

the most helpful because it's the basic structure of writing." Another claimed, "The most helpful comments are about how to rearrange the ideas, paragraphs, and the least helpful ones are about grammar, mechanics and so forth. That's because organization is the framework of an essay, but grammar and mechanics are minor characters in an essay." In addition, most students liked comments on idea development and considered them as crucial too. For instance, one student said, "Comments on structure and content are the most important elements that help me write a good essay; once I got these two things done, I can develop my writing skills, improve my language, word choices…." Further, during the interviews, the students indicated that organization and content were the major focuses of their teachers' comments. An analysis of the students' drafts revealed that the teachers commented primarily on organization and content on the students' early drafts.

Sixty-nine students desired and favored direct, explicit, detailed, and clear comments and considered them as important, but they disliked vague commentary. Excerpts from the students' responses are illustrated as follows.

> The comments I like most are the ones which tell me how to develop each point specifically and directly. The comments I like least are the ones like 'more details' because sometimes I have no idea about how to add more details.

> … I least like unclear comments, such as 'good, clear description'.

> I hope the teacher can critique every writing differently and specifically, not just give general suggestions to students.

> I got confused when she wrote some comment like 'confusing, explain.' I don't know where to start from.

> … Usually I do not know how to revise when they ask, 'More details,' 'You have to explain to me how to do it,'….

Similar to the students in Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) study and the students in Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study, who were unable to correctly comprehend and apply the teacher's indirect comments to their revision, the students in this study could not understand teachers' implicit suggestions or did not know how to incorporate them.

Further, the students in the current study expressed their needs for

teachers' suggestions on their word choices and usages. One hundred seven out of the 119 students chose the suggestions on vocabulary as the most important and useful element of teachers' comments and their major focus and interest on the later drafts.

The students admitted that they often could not express their ideas clearly or comprehensibly to the teacher in their drafts because of their limited vocabulary. One student said, "I have many ideas, but I don't know how to express it because I can't find the right word to use, or I have no idea about the word usage. I feel confused when I write because I don't know whether I put the right word in the right sentence." Also, being unable to decently express their ideas and purposes, the students often felt apprehensive about English writing.

Analysis of the student essays indicated that of certain sentences, the vocabulary and sentence structure were directly and literally translated from Chinese, and words improperly fitted the contexts. The students had difficulty not only in using the clear, concise, powerful words, but in distinguishing the subtle differences in meaning and functions among synonyms in the context. Corpus activity may thus provide the students with a new method of acquiring new words.

Interviews revealed that the students generally viewed the suggestions on their weaknesses as much more helpful than praise. Many of them believed that revising based on the constructive suggestions was the most effective way to excel in their writing performance and obtain good grades in writing. They strongly favored the teachers' comments which specifically pointed out the problems at the rhetorical, sentential, or lexical levels, and offered specific suggestions for the approaches to revise. They said that upon receiving the teachers' commentary, they would read the constructive criticisms again and again, evaluate the suggestions, then decide how to incorporate the comments. According to their responses to the open-ended questions, whereas 29 students liked teachers' praise, 98 students considered constructive criticisms as the most helpful. In contrast, praise without any constructive criticisms was considered by 91 students as the least helpful comments.

In addition, 78 students viewed corrections/identifications of grammatical or mechanical errors without any other macro-level comments as the least helpful and least favored commentary. Further, teachers' comments in question forms, which were associated with the purpose/focus of the students' writing, appeared to be ineffective and confusing for the freshmen. They reported that they often did not

understand teachers' purpose of asking the questions, or even though they understood it, they did not know what to do to revise. They wanted teachers to provide explicit guidance on how to solve the problems.

Students' reactions to teachers' comments across levels

Further, the sophomores and juniors appeared to take more control of their own writing than the freshmen did. Fifty-one sophomores and juniors did not like comments of subjective or sweeping judgments.

Forty-three students liked comments in interrogative forms, which made them to think about different possible solutions for their problems. Of the 43 students, 31 were juniors, 11 were sophomores, and 1 was freshman. For instance, one sophomore said, "I like teacher asking me questions because the questions help me think." One junior wrote, "Teacher's questions allow us freedom and choices in revising, and I feel that he respects my decision." Teachers' comments in question forms, which were associated with the purpose/focus of the students' writing, appeared to be more effective and less confusing for the sophomores and juniors than for the freshmen.

However, the freshmen liked and expected teachers to offer explicit suggestions on their weaknesses and illustrate concrete examples, and they disliked teacher comments in question forms. Excerpts from their responses could best describe their reactions.

> … I do not think that questions the teacher asks as helpful because I don't know what to do. I think the grammar corrections are the most helpful because I understand them well.

> I dislike it when the teacher just asks me 'why?' or 'more details.' I do not know what she wants me to do. I prefer that she tell us HOW TO WRITE by giving us concrete details.

> I hope that teachers could give me concrete advice/examples and exactly tell me how to develop my ideas rather than asking me questions.

The least helpful comments

One hundred and two students regarded the symbols as the least helpful comments. Symbols were perceived as not helpful because those problems indicated by the symbols made little sense to the students. Even though they reviewed the problems several times, they still could

not figure out what the problems were and the ways to tackle them. As one student commented, "… some correction symbols seemed confusing. I did not know what the teacher expected me to do." Also, the students indicated that the symbols were easily forgotten, and the identification/naming of symbols used by teachers varied from one to another, which easily caused confusion.

It is worth noting that many students valued and expected mixed comments which addressed both higher- and lower-level concerns about their writing on both early and later drafts. On the early drafts, the students wanted suggestions on micro-level issues while they far more needed suggestions on macro-level issues. Later examination of teacher comments on students' texts found that 4 out of 5 teachers provided mixed comments on students' texts although proportionally they provided many more comments on organization, content, and style on early drafts, and more comments on vocabulary, organization, and grammar on later drafts. All the teachers focused on meaning-related, global-level issues as much as or more than on local-level issues. In this EFL context, the students required teachers to attend to most aspects of their writing and believed that comments on most aspects helped them improve writing and develop writing skills. They apparently appreciated and expected teacher commentary to be comprehensive and extensive, rather than sparing and selective. They believed that teacher commentary in this manner empowered them to develop their writing skills. The students could be eager to and strongly desire improving most aspects of their writing, both macro- and micro- levels of their writing, on both early and later drafts. The students' high level of apprehension and lack of confidence in English writing (refer to Table 1, item 3, mean= 3.13) might also lead to such beliefs and expectations for obtaining as much teacher feedback as possible to improve their writing.

Previous L2 studies noted that students' desire for certain aspects of comments was influenced by their teachers' commenting approach (Dohrer, 1991; Leki, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefcowitz, 1996; Saito, 1994). In parallel, a close correspondence was found between the teachers' major focuses of comments on the students' early and later drafts, and the students' strong desire for those focuses. The students' highly positive perceptions and strong desire for macro-level aspects of teacher comments could be affected by the teachers' commenting methods which focused on organization and content.

DISCUSSION

The students in this study strongly believed that they needed comments on organization and content on the early and even the later drafts. Contrary to the students in Radecki and Swales' (1988) and the FL students in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1996) studies, the students in the present study desired comments on global- and rhetorical-level problems in their writing, especially those on organization, content, and style and viewed those comments as extraordinarily important, even on later drafts. Accordingly, most students perceived themselves as developing writers who were learning strategies of organizing their ideas logically and communicating the meaning to the readers, in addition to improving the accuracy of their language use.

In this study, the teachers' extensive and mixed but prioritized comments helped the students improve their writing. They served the students' needs and effectively helped the students revise. Analysis of quantitative data showed that by means of revisions, the students not only enhanced their overall writing achievement, but improved writing proficiency in both macro- and micro-level aspects of writing, including content, development, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. Although the students had the lowest mean on organization on the early drafts, they ultimately improved most in organization on the later drafts.

Further, the students in the current study expressed their needs for teachers' suggestions on their word/term choices. The students' views of the importance of vocabulary in their writing and their needs for improving their vocabulary were similar to the perspective of the Chinese graduate students in Pennington and Zhang's (1993) study, who regarded vocabulary as the primary aspect they would like to improve in their writing.

Unlike the ESL students in most of the current ESL studies, who desired comments on content and grammar on respectively the early and later drafts, the EFL students in the present study strongly needed and preferred comments on organization and vocabulary/term choices on respectively the early and later drafts, and strongly believed them to be important and helpful. The students' unique needs might be due to their language background (Chinese as L1), proficiency level, influences of teacher's commenting approach, personal beliefs, and previous educational experiences.

Conversely, correction symbols, praise without any constructive criticisms, correction/identification of grammatical and mechanical errors

without any suggestions on macro-level aspects of writing problems, and implicit, general, and unclear comments, were viewed as the least helpful comments and were least liked by the students.

The students highly accepted critical suggestions on their weaknesses but strongly disapproved general praise and praise without any critical, specific suggestions on approaches and strategies for revising their writing. In agreement with Burkland and Grimm's (1986) and Hyland and Hyland's (2001) studies, the students in this study did not value teachers' praise as much as the constructive commentary even though they appreciated their teachers' efforts in fostering their confidence in writing. The students' strong desire for constructive criticisms indicated that they expected commentary to be very practical and useful, which suggested that they were utilitarian-oriented. However, praise serves no negligible functions in their writing processes. The students might not be as conscious of the importance of praise as constructive criticisms in their writing. The students might have felt so comfortable with the positive comments that they were not aware of the value of positive comments on fostering their confidence, motivation, and interest in writing. More importantly, their lack of desire for praise on their papers could be because the praise was too general and vague. Therefore, whenever teachers provide praise, they may need to point out the specific aspects of the students' strengths in writing.

Earlier research conducted in ESL settings showed that students felt confused toward teachers' comments in question form (Ferris, 1995; Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Likewise, the freshmen in this study reported that they usually experienced difficulty in handling teacher comments in interrogative form. Teachers' interrogative comments were less effective for the freshmen than for the sophomores and juniors. Based on the students' reactions, we could infer that inexperienced writers might lack a repertoire of strategies necessary to deal with questions while more advanced writers could decipher the questions better and be able to use a variety of strategies to deal with them and revise successfully. According to Lees (1979), teachers' suggestions in interrogative form may require students to take more responsibility for their revision than the teachers' corrections and descriptions do. In the present study, the sophomores and juniors could be more able to take responsibility for their revision, less dependent upon the teachers' comments/corrections, more willing to take control of their own writings, and more aware of their own role in the writing processes than the freshmen were.

Suggestions for EFL Writing Instruction

Some preliminary suggestions for teacher comments could be drawn from the findings of this study. First, based on the EFL students' strong needs for constructive criticisms on macro-level aspects of their writing on both early and later drafts, particularly the criticisms on organization, it is important for teachers in this EFL context to constructively address the macro-level aspects of the student writing, especially organization, and to help develop the students' awareness of the rhetorical structure of English writing to effectively help the students learn to write. Without them, the students may feel discouraged or apprehensive of their writing and de-motivated to develop writing skills. Whereas L2 studies suggest that teachers attend to students' errors to meet the students' needs and motivate them to learn to write (Ferris, 1999, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998), to better attend to Taiwanese students' needs, teachers might have to mainly focus on the macro-level aspects of the student writing on both early and later drafts, address lexical choices on the later drafts, and comment on grammatical errors selectively on both early and later drafts. Also, this study showed that teachers' comments on macro-level aspects effectively helped the students refine the content, development, and organization of their writing. The importance of macro-level comments should never be overemphasized. In addition, teachers should inform students of their commenting methods and reach a consensus with the students on what should be commented on (Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). In addition, as many students viewed corrections/identifications on grammatical or mechanical errors without any macro-level comments as the least helpful and least favored commentary, teachers should avoid those types of comments and be aware of the value the students placed on the macro-level comments.

Second, a high positive relationship was found between the students' perceptions of global-level comments and their writing proficiency/ improvement whereas little relationship was found between the students' perceptions of local-level comments and their writing proficiency/ improvement. The students' perceptions of global-level commentary seemed to be the index of their writing performance/improvement because those who viewed the global-level teacher comments more positively tended to have higher writing proficiency/improvement and vice versa. Therefore, the students' perceptions of macro-level comments are more important and should influence teachers' response practices much more than their preferences for comments on local-level aspects do.

Further, for the students who react neutrally or negatively to the macro-level commentary and accept only the micro-level comments, teachers may need to intervene at the beginning of the course to foster and encourage the students' positive perceptions of and interest in the macro-level commentary to help them learn to write effectively. Teachers can reward the students when they successfully revise the macro-level aspects of their writing in response to the commentary. Furthermore, given the fact that most of the students who received their teachers' prioritized, mixed comments favored those comments and indeed improved the writing proficiency by revising based on the comments, it is likely that the more macro- or micro-level comments students receive, the more they expect and appreciate it, and the more they benefit from it. Teachers thus need to be aware that their response practices might shape their students' perceptions: Their emphasis on macro- or micro-level aspects of student essays in their comments would encourage students' positive perceptions of and interest in feedback on those aspects, and vice versa, in a way which the students may carry on to their later writing experiences.

Third, comments on the proficiency in diction and precision in word choices and idea expression were very important to the students. Thus, teachers should help the students expand their vocabulary and acquire new words in contexts through extensive exposure to different texts, and help them accurately express themselves by constant practice in writing.

Fourth, teachers should vary commentary based on the student levels. Comments in question forms will be more helpful for students of advanced writing skills than for those of basic writing skills. Rather than asking novice student writers questions, teachers should provide explicit suggestions to help those students revise more effectively. In addition, teachers should vary commentary on students' errors. For the students with higher level of writing proficiency, teacher should identify errors more often than correct the errors; on the contrary, for those with lower level of writing proficiency, teachers should correct errors more often than identify the errors.

Fifth, teachers should avoid symbols to indicate content, syntactical, or lexical problems because they are confusing and difficult to remember for the students. If teachers choose to use symbols, they may have to provide students with a list of the symbols' corresponding meaning and explain them in detail at the beginning of the semester. Moreover, it is very important for EFL teachers to explicitly point out the students'

writing problems, and provide direct, specific, and detailed suggestions for their revision.

Further, students should frequently reflect on their own writing, and the diversity and fluidity of their academic writing should be facilitated (Kubota & Lehner, 2004). Further, L2 writing teachers should encourage students to learn to write diverse genres of texts aimed for different audiences, thus helping the students adjust their own stance, rhetorical structure, and style, to fit different audiences' needs and discover the fun of writing. Students should be assisted to flexibly meet the needs of different readers and writing contexts (Belcher & Liu, 2004), and be empowered to express their purposes and problems with their writing through teachers' feedback and clarify the misunderstandings through conferencing (Goldstein, 2004).

CONCLUSION

The EFL students in this study have unique needs for teacher comments, which are very different from those of most L2 students of other studies. It is important that EFL teachers are aware of and attend to the students' needs and affective factors. In addition, as this study shows, the students' highly positive perceptions of the global-level comments are mostly associated with high level of writing proficiency/improvement and vice versa. Teachers should not neglect the students' reactions. However, it does not mean that teachers should unconditionally provide whatever comments the students require. It is very important that the teachers make rhetorical decisions in providing comments based on the students' needs, level, audience, purposes of writing, interactions, and contexts, and strike a balance between what students expect and what the context and research show, to most effectively help the students develop writing skills. As teachers "adjust[ing] amount and type of feedback" based on genres of assignment, terms of the semester, and levels of students' writing abilities (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997, p. 178), they should contextualize and individualize their comments and be flexible in providing comments.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

Due to time restraint and the small-scale of this study, certain limitations exist. Future studies could examine the ways the teachers

comment on the students' texts, the ways the students utilize the comments to revise the drafts, and how the comments influence the revision. Also, the relationship between students' perceptions of commentary and their actual revision processes could be examined. In addition, more interviews would be recommended to gain more thorough understanding of the characteristics of EFL students' reactions. Additionally, the participants represented students who learn English writing for academic purposes. Therefore, future replicated study which examines different instructional settings where learning English is for specific purposes, could yield different results. Since L2 students' affective factors might have important influences upon their processes of learning to write or strategies for incorporating feedback, future studies could explore the relationship between the students' level of writing apprehension, motivation, interest, or confidence, and their writing proficiency.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Ming-Tzu Liao, Department of English, National Kaohsiung Normal University,
Kaohsiung, Taiwan
E-mail address: mliao@nknucc.nknu.edu.tw

Ming-Tzu Liao

APPENDIX

Essay Rating Form

Writer's ID Number: _____

Criteria	Score	Feature
Content		
	4	Valuable thesis/purpose clearly defined and a focus well maintained; excellent understanding of topic and writing context; rich, distinctive content which is original, perceptive, and/or persuasive; readers' interests and knowledge of the texts are well considered
	3	Good thesis/purpose established and a focus effectively maintained; complete understanding of topic and writing context; thorough content; great reader interest
	2	Usual thesis/purpose; acceptable but hasty and incomplete understanding of topic and writing context; appropriate but predictable content which is sketchy and overly general; occasionally repetitive, irrelevant, or inconsistent ideas/material; average reader interest
	1	Major thesis/purpose not obvious; weak content; little or no understanding of topic and writing context; low reader interest
Idea Development		
	4	Thesis/purpose clearly and excellently established; rich information about the topic; thesis developed and supported with substantial, specific, and pertinent details and sound generalizations
	3	Thesis/purpose clearly defined and supported with sound generalizations and relevant details
	2	Thesis/purpose acceptably defined and supported with relevant details and sufficient generalizations; some unsound generalizations
	1	Purpose not established and developed with incomplete and irrelevant details and unsound generalizations

Organization		
	4	Exceptionally clear plan connected to thesis/purpose; plan developed with consistent focus on proportion, emphasis, logical order, flow, and summary of ideas; fluent transition words and phrases to link information within and between paragraphs; paragraphs coherent, unified, and effectively developed; excellent title, introduction, and conclusion
	3	Clear plan related to thesis; plan developed with proportion, emphasis, logical order, and summary of ideas; adequate transition words and phrases to link information within and between paragraphs; paragraphs coherent, unified, and adequately developed; effective title, introduction, and conclusion
	2	Appropriate plan but regularly presented; paragraphs adequately unified and coherent, but simply somewhat effective in development; one or two weak topic sentences; transitions between paragraphs but not smooth, mechanical; average title, introduction, and conclusion
	1	Plan not clear, inappropriate, undeveloped, or developed with irrelevance, redundancy, inconsistency, or illogical order; paragraphs incoherent, underdeveloped, or not unified; unclear, ineffective, or no transitions between paragraphs; weak or ineffective title, introduction, and conclusion
Grammar/Mechanics		
	4	Impressively accurate use of sentence structure and grammar; sentences skillfully constructed, unified, coherent, effectively varied; deftness in coordinating, subordinating, and emphasizing ideas; harmonious agreement of content and sentence design; clarity and effectiveness of expression enhanced by consistent use of accurate mechanical conventions, including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; striking manuscript form
	3	Effective and clear use of sentence structure and grammar; sentences accurately and coherently constructed with some variety; apparent and varied coordination, subordination, and emphasis of ideas; some errors in complex patterns; flow of communication, occasionally impeded by punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling errors; good manuscript form

	2	Acceptable use of sentence structure and grammar; sentences constructed accurately but lacking in variety and fluidity; minimal skills in coordinating, subordinating, and emphasizing ideas; clarity affected by some awkward, incomplete, combined, and/or inappropriate predicated clauses and complex sentences; adequate clarity and effectiveness of expression, though weakened by punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling errors; satisfactory manuscript form
	1	Unacceptable use of sentence structure and grammar; frequent sentence flaws to distract and frustrate the readers; many incoherent, combined, incomplete, and/or inappropriate predicated sentences; simple and mechanical sentence structure; lacking in clarity and communication interrupted by frequent punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling errors; weak manuscript form
Vocabulary/Tone		
	4	Distinctive use of vocabulary; fresh, precise, concrete, economical, and idiomatic word choice; superior word form; appropriate, consistent, and engaging tone
	3	Clear, accurate, and idiomatic use of vocabulary; some errors in word form and/or occasional weakness in word choice; generally clear, appropriate, consistent, and engaging tone
	2	Satisfactory use of vocabulary; generally clear, accurate, and idiomatic word choice, but sometimes predictable, verbose, or imprecise; limited vocabulary; clarity weakened by errors in subject-verb and pronoun agreement, viewpoint, word forms; monotonous and/or inconsistent tone
	1	Unacceptable use of vocabulary; improper, non-idiomatic, and/or inaccurate word choice which distracts the reader or obscures content; numerous word form errors; improper and/or inconsistent tone

Score: _____/20 = Overall Score