

## MALAYSIAN ESL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE, PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK IN WRITING

(Sikap, Persepsi dan Kecenderungan Pelajar *ESL* terhadap Maklum Balas Guru di dalam Penulisan)

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### ABSTRACT

Students' perception and preferences on teacher-written feedback (TWF) tend to vary in different learning contexts. This study explores the perceptions and preferences of TWF among 78 Malaysian ESL students in a public pre-university college in Malaysia. Quantitative data were obtained from a questionnaire to examine the students' general attitude and perceptions of TWF, and their preferences of the types and amount of written feedback received on their written work. This study reveals that the ESL students had a positive attitude and perception of the teacher-written feedback practice based on the perceived usefulness of the feedback, and the integrative-feedback type that combines both the content and language feedback was mostly favoured. The result also shows that the students had a high preference for indirect coded corrective feedback strategy in highlighting language errors, and preferred a large amount of feedback that highlighted all errors on their written work. These findings potentially help teachers to make a more informed decision when using teacher-written feedback so as to cater to students' varying needs and perceptions in order to improve its use in writing.

*Keywords:* Attitude; ESL students; feedback; perceptions; preferences; writing

### 1. Introduction

The issue of feedback in writing has been much researched over the past decades. Ferris (1995) stated that many things may have changed in the field of composition research and pedagogy but one thing has remained constant and that is the significance of teacher feedback on writing. Several methods of providing feedback in the writing pedagogy have been studied but teacher-responses in the form of teacher written feedback (TWF) remains as the primary method of response among teachers. It is indispensable in the students' whole writing process. It plays an important part in coaching students the conventions of writing in a particular culture, as well as second language (L2) grammatical forms (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Paulus, 1999). In fact, ESL learners expect and value teacher written feedback over other methods of responses because they are of the opinion that teachers have the expertise in the content as well as the form on the essays (Ferris, 1995).

While teachers often try their best to provide effective written feedback that fosters successful written output, they often find themselves in a dilemma in deciding whether their feedback should focus on form or content, what corrective feedback strategy should they use, and how much should they correct in the students' written work (Zaman & Azad, 2012). Various descriptive studies on learners and teachers' perceptions of feedback has been done in recent years. However, the results obtained in these studies may not reflect the students' preferences in different situations and learning contexts (Chen, Nassaji & Liu, 2016;

Kietlinska, 2006; Leki, 1991). In particular, previous research in this area was mainly conducted with international students in English-speaking countries where the learning context may differ greatly from those in non-English speaking countries like Malaysia. In Malaysia, although English is regarded as a second language, the opportunities to practice the target language may vary depending on the learning environment, along with the varied cultural and classroom dynamics experienced by the ESL learners. This may impact the way these ESL learners perceive the practice of teacher written feedback, and preferences may vary depending on their learning experiences. Besides, there tends to be a common practice that feedback is given to students without consulting their preferences which may consequently result in students' rejection of the feedback (Saidon, Said, Soh & Husnin, 2018).

Thus, in order to guide teachers in making a more practical decision when providing feedback, there is a need to specifically address the students' perceptions and preferences of teacher written feedback in their existing writing contexts. This exploratory study looks into the Malaysian ESL students' perspective of teacher written feedback at a public pre-university college in Malaysia. The main objectives guiding this study were:

- (1) to investigate ESL students' general attitude and perception towards the existing teacher written feedback practice;
- (2) to identify the ESL students' preferred type and strategy of teacher written feedback that are considered useful;
- (3) to determine the ESL students' preferred amount of teacher written feedback in their written work.

In meeting the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated and examined:

- (1) What is the general attitude and perception of ESL students towards the existing teacher written feedback?
- (2) What are the ESL students' preferred type and strategy of teacher written feedback that are considered useful?
- (3) What is the ESL students' preferred amount of teacher written feedback in their written work?

## **2. Literature Review**

There has been a growing literature on teacher written feedback, as well as those that address students' preferences, reactions and perceptions regarding teacher written feedback. Teacher written feedback (TWf) is defined by Mack (2009) as any comments, questions or error corrections that are written on students' assignments. This form of feedback is viewed as purely informational and acts as a medium for teachers to channel responses and advice in assisting students' improvement in writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). While teachers often strive to provide effective written feedback that aims to foster successful written output of their students, interpretation gap tends to exist between the teacher and students in which there is a misfit between what the teacher offers as 'effective' feedback and what the students would like to get (Lee, 2008). Such a mismatch tends to affect the practical effectiveness of the feedback and students' improvement in writing as the students' writing process is crucially connected to how they respond to the teacher written feedback (Silver & Lee, 2007).

## **2.1. Types of teacher written feedback**

Teacher written feedback that is commonly used in L2 writing includes form-focused feedback and content-based feedback (Park, 2006). Form-focused feedback deals with grammar and mechanics while content-based feedback focuses on organisation, ideas and amount of detail (Fathman & Whalley, 1990). In L2 writing, form-focused feedback is viewed to be more prevalent. In fact, Fathman and Whalley (1990) suggested that writing accuracy improved only when grammar feedback was given. Additionally, Ferris (2004) posited that grammar correction is necessary for L2 students who need additional intervention as they are still in the process of learning syntax, morphology and lexicon of English. Truscott (1996), however, was against grammar correction in L2 writing and regarded form-focused feedback as ineffective and should be abandoned. Ur (1996) further highlighted that excessive attention on errors can be discouraging and demoralizing and can distract both the learners and teachers' attention from the equally important aspects of content and organisation. While the argument continues on the effectiveness of the different types of feedback, it still remains unclear as to which type of these feedback is regarded as the most effective, useful and preferred by L2 students.

### *2.1.1. Content-based versus Form-focused Feedback*

Findings on learners' preferred types of feedback have been inconsistent. Some recent studies on ESL/EFL learners' preferences of TWF found that content-feedback was greatly favoured over feedback on language accuracy whereby learners did not prefer written feedback that was used as a tool to promote accuracy (Agbayahoun, 2016; Alamis, 2010; Vasu, Chai & Nimehchisalem, 2016; Vengadasamy, 2002). Saidon, Said, Soh and Husnin (2018) also found that content feedback dominated teacher feedback in ESL secondary school students' written work but the feedback would only be perceived positively by students when they featured constructive comments rather than negative criticism. A study by Razali and Jupri (2014), in contrast, had earlier found that some students preferred criticism-feedback type as it promoted successful revisions of ones' writing. Saidon et al. (2018) and Silver and Lee (2007) also acknowledged the importance of content-constructive criticisms in feedback although criticisms were the least popular feedback type. These findings reiterate the results in earlier studies that demonstrated students' preferences for feedback on content and organisations of ideas, rather than on grammatical, structural and surface errors (Straub, 1997; Zamel, 1985).

On the other hand, some studies revealed learners' preferences for teacher-written feedback that focused on language accuracy. A few studies highlighted students' preferences and eagerness for feedback on form as it was viewed to be more useful in helping them to learn from grammatical mistakes compared to the feedback on content which was perceived as vague and contradictory to their perception (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Irwin, 2017; Leki, 1991; Lip, 2007 as cited in Saidon et al., 2018; Zacharias, 2007; Zaman & Azad, 2012). In fact, Ferris (2004, p. 56) asserted that "The lack of such feedback [on forms] may lead to anxiety and resentment, which could decrease motivation and lower confidence in their teachers". Additionally, research has also highlighted the issue on the amount of corrections that should be considered judicious whereby too much and too frequent of error corrections may stunt the students' writing and thinking process which makes writing a mere practice on grammar and vocabulary rather than a way to discover and express meaning (Truscott, 1996; Zamel, 1985). While studies suggest that students' preference on feedback type tends to vary, Ashwell (2000), Park (2006) and Wen (2013) highlighted the potential in using integrative feedback that makes use of both the content and form-focused feedback when giving teacher-written

feedback. This is based on the belief that the ultimate goal in writing involves the expansion of students' language while deepening their ideas in writing (Wen, 2013). This idea opposes Zamel's (1985) suggestion that content and form-focused feedback should be given separately whereby content feedback should be given on earlier draft, followed by feedback on form on the following draft.

### 2.1.2. *Corrective feedback strategies*

Teachers are often baffled by the question on the most practical and effective feedback strategy to employ in improving L2 writing accuracy. The most prevalent ones are the direct and indirect feedback strategies. In direct feedback, the teacher marks the errors and offers the correct form, while in indirect feedback, the teacher indicates the errors by underlining, circling or by using codes but does not provide the correct form. Studies in this area also found mixed results. For instance, Chandler (2003) found that students preferred the direct corrective feedback as it made writing revisions easier and faster. Similar findings were found in studies by Rashtchi and Abu Bakar (2019), Irwin (2017), Vasu et al. (2016), Zaman and Azad (2012) in which ESL/EFL learners favoured direct corrective feedback strategy where the teacher provides direct lexical and grammatical corrections and they found these corrections to be useful. These findings support Ellis' (2008) suggestion that direct feedback is preferred mainly because it has the advantage that it provides explicit information about the correct form and it is appropriate for beginner students or in a situation when errors are 'untreatable' (Lee, 2008). However, indirect feedback was also found to promote greater gains and better performance in writing accuracy which was preferred by some students (Ferris, 2003; Jamalinesari et al., 2015; Lalande, 1982). Wen (2013) further highlighted that while indirect feedback can save much of the teachers' time and freeing them from such correcting burden, it also provides students the opportunity to actively engage their minds in correcting their errors before returning their paper for reassessment. This is viewed to be more effective than the mere reading of the teachers' corrections (Wen, 2013).

Other feedback strategies further specify whether they are focused or unfocused feedback. There has also been mixed views as to whether teachers should mark all errors (unfocused feedback) or a few selective ones (focused feedback) in students' written output. Studies have found that students appreciate receiving large amounts of different types of feedback irrespective of the types of errors on which it is focused (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Ferris, 1995; Irwin, 2017; Rastchi & Abu Bakar, 2019). However, Ellis, Sheen, Murakami and Takashima (2008) suggested that L2 learners preferred receiving correction for specific error types as this approach was more likely to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of error and the correction needed (Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2011).

As studies in teacher-written feedback tend to present mixed results and that students' opinion and preferences have a bearing on the efficacy of teacher-written feedback, it is the intention of this study to gain insights into what students prefer and think as useful in helping them to better utilise the written feedback, as well as in helping teachers to specifically tailor the teacher-written feedback to their students' needs.

## 3. Methodology

This is an exploratory study that uses the quantitative approach. The following further explains the elements of methodology employed in this study.

### 3.1. *Participants and context of study*

This study was conducted at a public college for pre-university students in Malaysia. Seventy eight second year students participated in this study. These students followed a 2-year course of study and took up a compulsory English course based on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) syllabus which includes the writing component. Towards the end of their two-year course, the students were required to sit for a MUET national-level examination which determined their chances to advance to tertiary level in a course of their choice based on their MUET results. Hence, there was a great concern in getting a good result in the MUET examination, which included the writing paper.

The participants in this study represented three intact classes. These classes were taught by trained ESL teachers with at least a degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). All students followed the same course syllabus for the writing component with a two-hour weekly class meeting. The writing component focuses on writing a report based on visuals given and essay writing of either argumentative or discursive essay. The students' level of English Language proficiency varied and they mainly used their mother-tongue for oral and written communication. Most only practised using the target language during English classes. Besides, these students were of different ethnicity with varying cultural background and most came from the sub-urban areas. The Malay language serves as the universal language for the different ethnics. Moreover, the language of instruction at the institution is the Malay language.

Hence, based on the students' language background and the need to perform well in the MUET examination which is akin to a tertiary level placement test, purposive sampling method was used to obtain a general idea of ESL students' attitude, perception and preferences of teacher-written feedback to find out their responses which ultimately may improve their performance in writing. Additionally, the findings may assist teachers and students alike to bridge the interpretation gap in what they believe to be effective in teacher feedback in order to foster improvement in the practice of giving preferred written feedback to students.

### **3.2. Research instrument**

This study used a student questionnaire adapted from Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), Agbayahoun (2016) and Silver and Lee (2007), and were modified to suit the local context in order to elicit participants' perceptions and preferences about teacher written feedback. It was presented both in the English and Malay language to cater for the varying English language proficiency levels among the participants. The quantitative data were collected by means of statements rated on a four-point likert-scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree), close-ended items in the dichotomous Yes-No and single-response format, and items with frequency-response format. The questionnaire consists of 22 items that specifically elicit responses on the participants' attitude and perceptions of teacher-written feedback, and their preferences on comment-types, error-correction strategy and the preferred amount of feedback received on their written work. Prior to conducting this research, the adapted *Student Questionnaire on Teacher-Written Feedback* was reviewed by two ESL lecturers with a master degree in related field to ensure that it has content and construct validity. The questionnaire is found to have a satisfactory level of reliability at .772.

### **3.3. Data collection procedures**

The study was conducted when the participants were two months into their second year and had undergone ample writing practices on report writing and essay writing during their first

year. The respective teachers who taught the three intact classes continued teaching the writing component and carried out their writing activities as planned and stipulated in the syllabus. The common essay writing activities included multiple drafting of argumentative and discursive essays. The participants produced multiple drafts of argumentative and discursive essays of at least two drafts and each draft was submitted to their respective teachers to be marked and later returned to the participants for them to revise their written work, and resubmit to their respective teachers to be graded. For the purpose of this study, the teachers had the freedom to employ feedback that was either content-based or form-focused or both, and they freely decided on the amount of feedback given. Besides, the teachers also continued marking the students' written work by using feedback strategies they commonly used. The lessons on writing continued for six weeks and participants had the experience of receiving written feedback on a few cycles of their written work. The *Student Questionnaire on Teacher-Written Feedback* was administered by the three respective teachers in each class in the following week.

### 3.4. Data analysis

The responses to the questionnaire items were analysed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26, to obtain descriptive statistics. Responses to items on likert-scale and frequency-response format were analysed by their mean scores to indicate the participants' attitude, perceptions and preferences of TWF. Meanwhile, in analysing the responses to the Yes-No options, a marked 'Yes' indicated the participants' agreement to the statements (applies to me, describes me), while a marked 'No' indicated their disagreement to the statements (does not apply to me, does not describe me). Responses to single-response items were analysed descriptively. Hence, responses to all questionnaire items are presented in the forms of mean scores, and frequencies and percentages to show the pattern of their attitude, perceptions and preferences based on the respective item-type.

## 4. Findings

The findings of this study are based on the three research questions. Research question 1 seeks answers to the question – *What is the general attitude and perception of ESL students towards the existing teacher-written feedback?* Seven likert-scale items and items (8) to (16) of the questionnaire elicited the participants' general attitude and perception towards the current practices of teacher written feedback on their written work respectively. The results are shown in Table 1, 2 and 3 below. As Table 1 shows, the participants generally had a positive attitude towards teacher written feedback with a mean score of between 1.51 to 2.01 for positive statements relating to receiving TWF on their written work, although some expressed having difficulties in understanding the meaning of the feedback (item (6)).

Table 1: Participants general attitude towards Teacher Written Feedback

Statements:	Mean ratings <sup>a</sup> (N = 78)
(1) I like my teacher to give me feedback on my composition.	1.51
(2) I look forward to receiving feedback from my teacher on my composition.	1.58
(3) I pay very careful attention to what my teacher wrote on my composition.	1.73
(4) I usually understand the feedback made on my composition.	1.96
(5) I usually try to revise my composition based on the feedback offered.	2.01
(6) I usually have difficulties in understanding the meaning of the feedback.	2.38

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<hr/> <p>(7) The feedback makes me want to try harder to improve my writing.</p>	1.78
<sup>a</sup> Strongly agree = 1; Agree = 2; Disagree = 3; Strongly disagree = 4	

Items (8) to (14) in the Yes-No response format further elicited the participants perceptions of TWF in terms of its perceived usefulness. Table 2 below illustrates the participants' positive view of the teacher-written feedback based on their responses to the 'Yes' option, with a majority total of 64 (45.1%) participants who perceived the TWF as useful as it showed the positive points and areas that needed improvement, and 42 (29.6%) participants viewed the TWF as easy to read and understand. However, there were also less favourable views on the current TWF practices with a total of 36 (46.1%) responses that considered the TWF as confusing, overwhelming with too many feedback points, discouraging and not useful with no suggestions for improvement or no feedback at all.

Table 2: Participants' Impression of the usefulness of Teacher Written Feedback

Questionnaire Item:	<i>The teacher written feedback I received on my composition is...</i>	Response frequencies (Yes) (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(8)	Often clear – easy to read and understand	42	29.6
(9)	Useful – it shows positive points and areas that need improvement	64	45.1
(10)	Discouraging – it shows only negative aspects and criticisms	4	2.8
(11)	The feedback is often confusing – not clear and difficult to understand	15	10.6
(12)	Overwhelming – too many feedback points (on content and language)	7	4.9
(13)	Less useful – offers no suggestions for improvement	2	1.4
(14)	Not useful – No feedback at all – only marks/grades	8	5.6

Items (15) and (16) in the single-response format further examined the participants' actions that signified their perceptions on the usefulness of TWF they received on their written work as shown in Table 3 below. Responses to item (15) and (16) presented a mixed outcome. A slightly higher number of participants chose to only read the marks and comments given on their written work (33.3%) than those who chose to read the marks, comments and seek clarification for feedback points they did not understand (28.2%). However, an encouraging number of responses, 20.5% and 12.8% indicate that participants chose to read the marks, comments and correct the mistakes that were easy to correct, while some revised the composition and resubmitted to the teacher respectively. A negligible total of 4 (5.1%) participants chose to only read the marks. Meanwhile, responses to item (16) highlighted that a significant 55.1% participants chose to seek clarification from friends for incomprehensible parts in the feedback compared to seeking clarification from teachers (34.6%), while a noticeable 10.3% chose to ignore them.

Table 3: Participants' Responses to Teacher-Written Feedback

Questionnaire Item (15):	<i>When I get my marked composition, I usually...</i>	Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a)	Only read the marks	4	5.1
(b)	Read the marks and comments only	26	33.3
(c)	Read the marks and the comments, and ask for clarification on feedback points I do not understand	22	28.2

Table 3: (Continued)

(d)	Read the marks, and the comments, and correct the mistakes that are easy to correct.	16	20.5
(e)	Read the marks, and the comments, and revise my composition based on the feedback given before submitting to my teacher again.	10	12.8
Questionnaire Item (16): <i>When I do not understand the meaning of some feedback or comments on my composition, I usually...</i>		Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a)	Ignore them	8	10.3
(b)	Ask for clarification from my teacher	27	34.6
(c)	Get help for clarification from my classmates / friends	43	55.1

Research question 2 investigates the ESL learners' preferences on the types and strategy of teacher-written feedback – *What are the ESL students' preferred type and strategy of teacher-written feedback that are considered useful?* Table 4 and 5 below sum up the results on the participants' preferred comment-type based on the single-response and frequency-response item format. The overall result shows that the participants had a high preference for teacher-written feedback that are both content-based and form-focused. Option (d) for item (17) and option (c) for item (18) both show that the preferences for comments on content and language errors received a significant amount of positive responses of 67 (85.9%) and 63 (80.8%) respectively. Meanwhile, the result in Table 5 indicates that both the feedback on content and language received equal attention (*or the lack of it*) with a close mean scores of 3.00 and 2.90 respectively, signifying the participants' undivided preference for comment-type that fosters revision.

Table 4: Participants' Preferences of Comment-Type

Questionnaire Item (17): <i>When giving feedback to my composition, I prefer my teacher to...</i>		Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a)	Give marks only	0	0.0
(b)	Give marks and mark language errors only	6	7.7
(c)	Give marks and give comments on content only	5	6.4
(d)	Give marks, mark language errors and give comments on content	67	85.9
Questionnaire Item (18): <i>I prefer to receive feedback on my composition that involves...</i>		Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a)	Comments on the content (ideas, organization of ideas)	6	7.7
(b)	Comments on the language errors (grammar, vocabulary)	9	11.5
(c)	Comments on both content and language errors	63	80.8

Table 5: Participants Preferences of Comment-type that promotes revisions

Questionnaire item: <i>Based on your preference, how often do you revise your composition based on comments involving...</i>		Mean ratings <sup>a</sup>
(21)	Content (Ideas and organization of ideas)	3.00
(22)	Language (grammar and vocabulary)	2.90

<sup>a</sup>Always = 1; Usually = 2; Sometimes = 3; Not very often = 4; Never = 5

Item (19) further examined the participants' preferred error-correction strategy employed on their written work. Table 6 shows that participants had a high preference for indirect coded feedback strategy where teachers circle or underline the errors, and use a code to indicate error-type (59.0%), compared to the preferences for direct feedback where corrections for errors are provided (37.2%). Indirect un-coded feedback by circling or underlining errors only was the least popular feedback strategy (3.8%).

Table 6: Participants' Preferences of Error-correction Strategy

Questionnaire Item (19): <i>When marking errors on my composition, I prefer my teacher to...</i>	Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a) Circle/ underline the errors only	3	3.8
(b) Circle/ underline the errors, and provide the corrections for the errors	29	37.2
(c) Circle/ underline the errors, and use a code to indicate the type of errors (i.e. SVA/ SPE/ ART/WW/ PREP.)	46	59.0

Research question 3 attempts to answer the question – *What is the ESL students' preferred amount of teacher written feedback in their written work?* Questionnaire item (20) investigated the participants' preferences for the amount of feedback on their written work. As shown in Table 7, a majority of 38 (64.7%) participants preferred all errors to be marked on their written work. Meanwhile, not more than 20% of the participants preferred TWF that highlighted a few or some major errors only, or errors that affected meaning. Only 2 (2.6%) responses indicate a preference for comments on content only.

Table 7: Participants' Preferences on the Amount of Corrective Feedback in their Writing

Questionnaire Item (20): <i>When marking my composition, I prefer my teacher to...</i>	Response frequencies (N = 78)	Response frequencies in Percent (%)
(a) Mark all errors	38	64.7
(b) Mark some major/serious errors only	15	19.2
(c) Mark a few major/serious errors only	10	12.8
(d) Mark errors that affect meaning only	13	16.7
(e) Give comments on ideas or content only, not on language errors	2	2.6

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to illustrate the general attitude and perceptions of Malaysian ESL students towards the existing practice of teacher-written feedback on their written work and their preferences on the types of comments, error-correction strategy and amount of feedback employed on their writing. The survey results reveal that Malaysian ESL students generally had a positive attitude and perception of the current practice of teacher-written feedback on their written work. Their positive attitude and view of the written feedback was generally based on the perceived clarity and usefulness of the feedback given in helping them to identify areas of weaknesses that needed improvement in their written work.

The students also favoured feedback that focuses on both the content and language errors. This outcome contradicts the suggestions in earlier research that students are more interested in receiving comments that focus on content and organisation of content (i.e. Agbayahoun, 2016; Alamis, 2010; Saidon et al., 2018; Straub, 1997; Vengadasamy, 2002; Vasu et al., 2016), or those on forms only (i.e. Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Irwin, 2017; Leki, 1991; Lip, 2007 as cited in Saidon et al., 2018; Zacharias, 2007; Zaman & Azad, 2012). Thus, Zamel's (1985) idea that content-based and form-focused feedback should be given separately is not supported in this study as far as the students' preference is concerned. Instead, the suggestion by Park (2006) and Wen (2013) on using integrative feedback that combines both feedback on content and language could be a more practical option in meeting the students' needs for teacher-written feedback.

The students also preferred indirect coded corrective feedback strategy in dealing with language errors on their written work. This result contradicts the idea that ESL learners appreciate direct corrective feedback more in their written work (i.e. Chandler, 2003; Hedgcock & Letkowitz, 1999 as cited in Vasu et al., 2016; Irwin, 2017; Rastchi & Abu Bakar, 2019). This study also demonstrates that the ESL students preferred unfocused written feedback that highlighted all errors in their written work as found in earlier study by Rastchi and Abu Bakar (2019), Irwin (2017) and Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) that students appreciate receiving large amounts of different types of feedback irrespective of the types of errors.

Based on the findings of this study, there are a few suggested pedagogical practices for teachers to consider when giving written feedback to ESL learners. While both content and language feedback is perceived favourably and considered useful in promoting revisions, the feedback, nevertheless should not be too overwhelming with too many feedback points or merely highlighting the negative aspects of the writing. As suggested by Wen (2013) that receiving compositions covered with too much ink is disheartening and hence, reduces the perceived effectiveness of the feedback. The feedback should also offer points for improvement, and written clearly without ambiguity. This is particularly crucial when giving the much preferred indirect and unfocused coded corrective feedback where symbols are used to indicate the types of errors without corrections. As such, teachers need to consider the students' language proficiency level when giving written feedback for the students to understand terms or symbols used in the feedback. When using symbols, teachers need to make sure the students understand the meaning before or during correction (Wen, 2013). Additionally, while reading marks and comments is a common reaction to teacher-feedback, it is important for teachers to prompt students to reflect on and act on the feedback provided by correcting mistakes or revising their work for reassessment. This is because the conscious effort in correcting the errors and redrafting serves as "a key to converting the teacher's instruction into the students' own achievement in writing" (Wen, 2013, p. 430).

Despite the small-scale nature of this study, the results in this study potentially help teachers to make a more informed decision when using teacher-written feedback so as to meet the students' needs and improve its use among ESL learners in L2 writing. Besides, these findings reiterate the claim that attitude, perceptions and preferences for written feedback vary for learners in different contexts.

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