Chapter 5

Teacher Response to Student Writing: Issues in Oral and Written Feedback

Questions for Reflection

- *From your own experiences as a student writer, what memories do you have of teacher responses to your texts?*
- *What types of feedback have you as a writer found most helpful? Most problematic?*
- *Do you feel that the types of responses that you have received would also be appropriate for ESL student writers? Why or why not?*
- *As you think about responding to student writing in your present or future teaching, what questions and concerns come to mind? What do you feel you need to know or do to be able to give your students effective feedback?*

PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER RESPONSE

As discussed in chapter 1, approaches to teaching composition (whether to native speaker [NS] or ESL writers) have changed

dramatically over the past quarter century. Despite all these changes, however, one element has remained constant: Both teachers and students feel that teacher feedback on student writing is a critical, nonnegotiable aspect of writing instruction. In most instances, teacher response represents the single largest investment of teacher time and energy, much more than time spent preparing for or conducting classroom sessions. Teacher feedback also provides the opportunity for instruction to be tailored to the needs of individual students through face-to-face dialogue in teacher–student writing conferences and through the draft–response–revision cycle, during which teachers assist students through their written commentary at various points.

Teachers' awareness of the time they spend responding to student writing and of the potential benefits of their commentary raises the stakes of this complex and challenging endeavor. Novice teachers can be paralyzed with anxiety over providing feedback to student writers, not knowing where to start or how to make comments that are clear and constructive without conveying messages that are too discouraging or directive. More experienced instructors can be overwhelmed by the time it takes to respond effectively to student writing and can find themselves wondering if, at the end of the day, their feedback is helpful and has really done their students any good. When we have made conference presentations or conducted workshops on this topic, one of the most frequently asked questions is, "I am drowning in the paper load. How can I make this go more quickly?"[1]

This chapter addresses the concerns of both novice teachers who may feel they do not know where to start and veteran teachers who would like to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of their commentary. We first outline what L1 and L2 composition researchers have discovered about teacher feedback and then move to some principles and practical guidelines for optimal responding practices.

RESEARCH ON TEACHER FEEDBACK

Although researchers have examined error correction in ESL writing quite extensively (see chapter 7 and Ferris, 2002b, 2003b), surprisingly little research has investigated other sorts of teacher commentary in L2 writing. A number of articles suggest procedures and techniques for responding to ESL compositions, but

most of these appear to be based largely on L1 research or on individual teachers' experience and intuitions. Many L1 studies suffer from serious methodological flaws and are not directly applicable to L2 writing instruction. Notably, in a mid-1990s collection of articles on second language writing (Leeds, 1996), the only article on teachers' written response to ESL writing was one published more than a decade earlier (Zamel, 1985). However, since the first edition of this book was published, the research base on this topic has grown steadily.

Empirical studies of teacher feedback have typically represented three major categories: (a) descriptive studies of what teachers actually do when responding to student writing, (b) research on the short- and long-term effects of teacher commentary, and (c) surveys of student opinions about and reactions to instructor feedback. Although the research base on these issues is far from comprehensive or even adequate, enough studies have been undertaken in both L1 and L2 composition settings to allow speculation based on patterns and trends that emerge from the literature to date.[2]

Descriptive Studies on the Nature of Teacher Feedback

In attempting to describe and categorize teacher commentary, researchers have looked at two major issues: what teacher feedback is focused on and how teacher comments are constructed. Early reviewers of L1 and L2 research on the nature of teacher feedback were sharply critical of instructors' responding behaviors, variably describing them as ineffective and as an "exercise in futility" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981, p. 1); as "arbitrary and idiosyncratic" if not mean-spirited (Sommers, 1982, p. 149); as overly directive, removing "students' rights to their own texts" (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Sommers, 1982; Straub, 1996); and as consisting primarily of "short, careless, exhausted, or insensitive comments" (Connors & Lunsford, 1993, p. 215). Zamel (1985) noted that L2 research findings agreed with the major conclusions drawn concerning the response patterns of L1 writing teachers.

In considering such negative reports, however, we should recognize that most of them arose from earlier instructional paradigms in which instructors read only one draft of student papers. Their feedback was provided primarily to explain and justify a grade, perhaps including some general suggestions for the student writer to consider "next time." Recent L1 and L2 research, focused on process-oriented models of instruction, have yielded far more encouraging and informative results. As teachers have adopted a multiple-draft response-and-revision approach to composition instruction, they have begun to intervene at earlier stages of the process (e.g., as students generate preliminary drafts), and to provide commentary on a broader range of issues.

Whereas it is fairly straightforward to observe that teachers should and do provide feedback at various stages of the writing process (not just at the end) and about a range of issues (not just grammar), how such commentary is constructed poses a question of greater complexity and practical interest to most teachers. Text-analytic descriptions of teacher commentary, whether written or oral, have been rare in the literature, no doubt, because such investigations are labor-intensive. Nonetheless, several recent studies have provided a promising start to this research base, yielding valuable and replicable analytic models (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris 1997, 2001a; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2002; Straub & Lunsford, 1995).

Effects of Teacher Commentary

Quantitative descriptions of teacher commentary are interesting and illustrative, yet perhaps the most pressing question for writing instructors is whether the feedback over which they labor so diligently actually helps their students' writing development. Studies that explicitly link teacher commentary to student revision have been scarce, indeed, and longitudinal research on student improvement as a result of teacher feedback has been virtually nonexistent. Part of the problem, perhaps, is that it can be difficult to trace the effects of specific teacher comments on revision, to measure "improvement," and to isolate the effects of teacher feedback from other aspects of the writing instruction, including composing practice, reading, and so on, that likely also affect literacy development.

That said, the few studies conducted along these lines have yielded results that are helpful in assessing the effectiveness of teacher commentary and certainly in identifying areas for future empirical investigations. One important and clear finding is that L2 student writers are very likely to incorporate teacher commentary into their subsequent revisions. For instance, Ferris (1997)

found that 76% of a teacher's suggestions were observably incorporated into students' next-draft revisions. Such findings should be simultaneously heartening and sobering. On the one hand, it certainly is encouraging to find that the commentary on which we work so hard is taken seriously by our student writers. On the other, it is daunting to realize that, because our students likely will not ignore our comments, the burden is on us to make sure that our feedback is helpful, or at least does no harm!

Thus, assuming that students do indeed pay attention to teacher commentary and try to use it in revision, the next question is whether such teacher-influenced revisions actually are beneficial to the quality of student texts and to the students' development as writers over time. Again, evidence on this point is scarce, but in the few attempts to trace the influence of teacher commentary on student writing, it appears that whereas most changes made by students in response to teacher feedback have a positive impact on their revised texts, at least some teacher comments lead students to make changes that actually weaken their papers (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997, 2001; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hyland & Hyland, 2002; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997).

Student Views on Teacher Feedback

Studies on the nature of teacher feedback and its effects on student writers have been rare. Nonetheless, a more substantial body of work in both L1 and L2 composition examines student reactions to teacher response (Arndt, 1993; Brice, 1995; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994; Straub, 1997; see also Ferris, 2003b, chapter 5, for a review). Findings across these studies are surprisingly consistent and include the following insights:

1. Students greatly appreciate and value teacher feedback, considering teacher commentary extremely important and helpful to their writing development.
2. Students see value in teacher feedback on a variety of issues, not just language errors.[3]
3. Students are frustrated by teacher feedback when it is illegible, cryptic (e.g., consisting of symbols, circles, single-word questions, comments), or confusing (e.g., consisting of questions that are unclear, suggestions that are difficult to incorporate into emergent drafts).
4. Students value a mix of encouragement and constructive criticism and are generally not offended or hurt by thoughtful suggestions for improvement.

Research on Teacher Commentary: Summary and Critique

Whereas research on teacher feedback still is in its preliminary stages (although certainly more evolved than when the first edition of this text was published!), we can offer the following suggestions based on the existing research findings:

- Feedback is most effective when provided at intermediate stages of the writing process.[4]
- Teachers should provide feedback on a range of writing issues (i.e., not just "language" or not just "ideas").
- Teachers should pay attention to the formal characteristics of their feedback (scope, pragmatic form, and so on) so that students can understand it and use it effectively.

Finally, we should add that contextual issues also need to be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of various feedback types (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Leki, 1990a; Reid, 1994). These issues include individual differences and predispositions (educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds; L2 writing proficiency levels; motivation for writing; see chapters 1 and 3); types of writing being considered (e.g., genres and text types, journal entries, speed-writes); and classroom context (class size, teacher–student rapport, instructional style); and other types of feedback provided (peer response, self-evaluation, and so forth). In other words, we cannot simply look at teachers' written comments or transcripts of their oral feedback as well as students' revisions and conclude that we know everything we need to know about a particular teacher, student, or class.

PRINCIPLES FOR PROVIDING WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Considering our own experiences with the feedback we have received on our own writing as well as feedback we have offered as teachers, together with what the literature suggests about teacher commentary in L2 writing, we present the following guiding principles (summarized in Fig. 5.1 and discussed briefly here) for approaching the delicate and arduous process of constructing written feedback for L2 student writers:

1. *The teacher is not the only respondent.* Depending on their ability and experience with writing, students also can benefit greatly from peer response and guided self-evaluation. Chapter 6 focuses extensively on peer response, touching briefly on self-evaluation. Many students will benefit further from working individually with private tutors in a campus writing center, or interacting with peers or experts in an online context (see chapter 9).
2. *Written commentary is not the only option.* For some writing issues and for some individual writers' temperaments and learning styles, in-person writing conferences may be a superior option to written commentary. We provide guidelines for effective teacher–student conferences later in this chapter. Some teachers also use alternative delivery modes such as audiotaped feedback and commentary sent to students electronically.
3. *Teachers need not respond to every single problem on every single student draft.* Many instructors prefer to focus primarily or even exclusively on the development of student ideas in early drafts, saving language or editing issues for the penultimate draft. In any case, experienced teachers prioritize issues on individual student papers and selectively respond to the most important issues. Attempting to address all student problems on every paper can exhaust teachers and overwhelm students with commentary that, in some cases, may exceed the amount of text they themselves produced!
4. *Feedback should focus on the issues presented by an individual student and his or her paper, not on rigid prescriptions.* Many instructors have been taught that they should never mark errors on early drafts or address content issues on final drafts. However, if a student's initial version is solid in terms of idea development and organization yet replete with frequent and serious grammatical errors, it could be counterproductive to ignore these problems and struggle to find something "content-related" to say. Conversely, if a penultimate or final draft shows inadequate development or ineffective organization, it would not serve the student's needs simply to mark grammatical errors and ignore the major rhetorical issues.
5. *Teachers should take care to avoid "appropriating," or taking over, a student's text. Final decisions about content or revisions should be left in the control of the writer.* A great deal has been written about teacher "appropriation" of student writing, a serious concern. As Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) argued, if a student feels that his or her text belongs to the teacher rather than to him or herself, the student may lose the motivation to write and revise. Students may resent overly controlling teacher responses. With L2 writers, however, the more serious risk is that they will make every attempt to please the teacher. However, if the teacher has misunderstood the student's purposes, or if the student has misunderstood the teacher's chief message, the writer's rigor in trying to give the teacher exactly what he or she asked for may well lead to

Guiding Principles of Written Teacher Commentary	
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2.	Written commentary is not the only option.
3.	Teachers do not need to respond to every single problem on every single student draft.
4.	Feedback should focus on the issues presented by an individual student and his or her paper, not on rigid prescriptions.
5.	Teachers should take care to avoid "appropriating," or taking over, a student's text. Final decisions about content or revisions should be left in the control of the writer.
6.	Teachers should provide both encouragement and constructive criticism through their feedback.
7.	Teachers should treat their students as individuals and consider their written feedback as part of an ongoing conversation between themselves and each student.

FIG. 5.1. Guiding principles.

an inferior revised product. All that said, in efforts to avoid such appropriative behavior (e.g., through questioning, indirectness, hedging) teachers also may fail to communicate suggestions and advice that student writers truly need.

6. *Teachers should provide both encouragement and constructive criticism through their feedback.* Most students recognize that teacher feedback is intended to help them and will not feel offended if we provide suggestions for improvement. However, it is human nature to desire and appreciate positive responses as well to the work we have done. Some teachers, reticent to discourage or offend students, may lavish praise through their written commentary while making few revision suggestions. Other teachers may be so dismayed at the problems they see that they jump right into extensive critiques without ever stopping to consider what the student writer might have done well. An important part of our job as L2 writing instructors is to build students' motivation, especially their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. Although it is not strictly necessary to strive for a 50/50 distribution of praise and criticism, teachers should recognize that both types of feedback are needed for the overall development of the writer and discipline themselves to provide written feedback at both ends of the spectrum on a regular basis.
7. *Teachers should treat their students as individuals, considering their written feedback as part of an ongoing conversation between themselves and each student writer.* Some authors urge teachers to provide "personalized" feedback, by writing summary endnotes like a letter, addressing the student by name and signing their own. Whereas providing personalized feedback is a good goal—and one that we strive toward—treating students as individuals additionally means following their development from draft to draft and assignment to assignment, pointing out persistent areas of weakness and encouraging them for the progress we observe. To accomplish all this, we will need to become acquainted with our students in class, during conferences, and through their writing (whether graded or not). We also must collect and read ongoing writing assignments (not just individual drafts) to trace and comment on student progress (or lack thereof, in some cases!).

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN TEACHER COMMENTARY

With some guiding principles in mind, we can turn to practical suggestions for constructing responses that are helpful, clear, personalized, and appropriately encouraging. This discussion is divided into three general "stages": approach (knowing what to look for and prioritization), response (providing the commentary itself), and follow-up (helping students maximize feedback and holding them accountable for considering it) (Fig. 5.2).

Approach

Preservice and novice teachers in our courses often articulate their greatest fear and struggle in responding to student papers as "Knowing where to start." Teachers may find themselves at one of two extremes: not knowing what to look for or how to analyze student work critically on the one hand, or being so overwhelmed

	Suggestions for Teacher Commentary
1.	Clarify your own principles and strategies for responding and share them with students.
2.	Read through the entire paper before making any comments.
3.	Use a scoring rubric, checklist, specific writing assignments, and prior in-class instruction to identify possible feedback points.
4.	Select two to four high-priority feedback points for that particular student and writing task.
5.	Compose a summary endnote that highlights both strengths and weaknesses of the paper.
6.	Add marginal commentary that further illustrates the specific points raised in the endnote.
7.	Check your comments to make certain that they are clear and effective; avoid jargon and questions.
8.	Give students opportunities in class to pose questions about your feedback.
9.	Ask students to write a cover memo that they submit with revisions, explaining how they have considered and addressed comments they received, or why they chose not to address them.

FIG. 5.2. Suggestions for teacher commentary.

with the amount and severity of students' writing problems that they are paralyzed with indecision about where to begin.

Instructors who are not sure what to look for can use institutional grading criteria to identify possible areas of weakness or student need (see chapter 8). A rubric or checklist that outlines the qualities of passing or excellent papers for that specific context can help us to articulate questions that we might ask ourselves as we read student papers. For example, one checklist includes the following point: "Opposing viewpoints have been considered and responded to clearly and effectively" (Ferris, 2003b, p. 135). Thus, a question that the teacher might consider while reading could be "Is this a one-sided argument, or have possible counterarguments been anticipated and addressed in the paper?"

A second lens through which teachers can look at student writing is the assignment or task type as well as the task's genre category (see chapters 4 and 8). For example, a prototypical freshman composition assignment requires writers to describe a personal experience and analyze its significance in their lives (Spack, 1990/1996). This assignment raises two possible heuristic questions that teachers could ask as they review student papers: (a) Has the experience or event been described clearly and effectively with adequate but not extraneous detail? and (b) Has the writer analyzed the importance of the experience and how it has shaped his or her life?

A third way in which teachers can approach written commentary is to consider specific issues that have been covered in the syllabus and to look carefully at student papers to see the extent to which they have grasped and applied those concepts to their writing. Class time may have been spent on writing effective introductory sections and using systematic connectors (transitional expressions, repetition, synonyms, pronouns, and so on) to achieve better textual cohesion and coherence. Instruction may have focused on using summary, paraphrase, and quotation to incorporate ideas from another author into one's text, shifting verb tense and aspect accurately in telling personal narratives, and so forth. Under such conditions, the teacher may wish to comment on those specific issues to remind the students of what they have studied and practiced in class.

Once an instructor has examined a writing sample and identified strengths, weaknesses, and "feedback points," he or she then needs to consider how to prioritize these features and select which ones to address in written commentary. As suggested by principle 3 earlier, it can be counterproductive for the teacher

to comment on every possible problem that he or she sees. Although prioritization decisions are highly variable and by definition subjective, in selecting feedback points to address, teachers should take into consideration: the point in the term and what has been covered in class; where students are in the drafting and composing cycle (first draft, penultimate draft); the needs of individual student writers including issues that have been covered in prior feedback cycles, persistent problems, and encouraging signs of progress; and the teacher's own judgments concerning the relative urgency of the possible feedback points in a particular paper, which again can and should vary from student to student. Considering all of these concerns, we have found that two to four major feedback points usually is about optimal.

The final point about an instructor's "approach" to writing comments on student papers is that he or she should have a philosophy or theory of commentary, such as the "guiding principles" discussed in chapter 1, and a strategy for commentary, whether it be using a checklist, writing a letter, highlighting language errors, or a combination of these options. The teacher should strive to be consistent in adhering to his or her own philosophy and strategy. We also would recommend explaining our own approach to students: Doing so forces teachers to articulate their approaches and attempts to follow them!

Response

Having selected feedback points for response, the instructor next has specific practical choices to make in providing commentary.

The Mechanics of Feedback. As teachers have become more conscious of developing effective response procedures, a variety of techniques have been proposed for providing feedback to students. These techniques include audiotaped oral feedback (in contrast to written comments on papers), comments inserted into students' word-processing files, and comments sent via e-mail.

Clearly, all of these techniques have their advantages. In the case of audiotaped commentary, students are provided with listening comprehension practice. In addition, student writers who are more comfortable processing information via auditory modes may find such feedback more helpful than written commentary (Reid, 1993b). However, some students may find oral responses frustrating and confusing because of weak aural skills or a more

visually oriented learning style. Teacher feedback provided via computer, whether via floppy disk or e-mail attachment, has the same visual advantages as handwritten commentary, with the added benefit that the teacher's handwriting will not interfere with students' mental processing of the written message (Ferris, 1995b). Further, feedback provided on the computer can encourage students to become comfortable with technology that can help them improve their writing (see chapter 9).

Although all these alternative response techniques have their appeal, convenience and the availability of technology may be the deciding issues for many classroom teachers. Some teachers find it easier to take a stack of papers with them wherever they go, working on them as they have time. Because of the time and space limitations associated with audiotape and computerized formats, many teachers may find these options to be practical for only a small proportion of their students' assignments. Teachers' decisions about whether to use these tools likely will rest on student preferences and learning styles (i.e., for oral vs. written feedback) and on teachers' preferences and needs.

The Tools of Handwritten Feedback. For the aforementioned reasons, a majority of teacher response is likely to be of the pen-and-paper variety. Even with this more traditional mode of response, teachers have several choices to make: Will they use pen or pencil—and what color pen? Will they use a separate response sheet or write directly on the student's paper? Will they use some sort of rubric, coding sheet, or checklist for responses, or will they provide only verbal comments? Again, research findings do not point to an advantage of a single method over another. Some practitioners insist that using a red pen seems punitive and can inhibit students or make them anxious. Others argue that the tone and substance of the response (and the relationship between teacher and student) is far more significant than the color of ink used (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

Regarding response sheets, rubrics, and checklists, it can be argued that such forms provide teachers and students with a consistent framework and terminology for providing and processing feedback. However, it also can be argued that response checklists can limit and inhibit teachers from providing personalized responses appropriate to the student and the assignment given. In Ferris et al. (1997), when a teacher switched from writing endnotes directly on the student paper to using a response form, she produced significantly fewer (and shorter) comments

(although not necessarily less effective ones). Perhaps more important, if students do not understand the checklist or rubric, the forms can actually be distracting and counterproductive.

Beyond the mechanics of feedback, a number of other practical questions should be considered.

Preliminary Drafts or Final Drafts? Most scholars agree that teacher feedback is most effective and most likely to be used when it is provided on preliminary drafts that will be revised subsequently (Ferris, 1995b; Krashen, 1984; Zamel, 1985). However, does this precept mean that feedback on a final draft is wasted energy? Perhaps not, but the process probably could be handled differently. Whereas feedback on earlier drafts is formative, helping students to see where their developing text can be improved, final-draft feedback tends to be evaluative and summative, informing students about what they did well, explaining the basis for a grade or a score (if one is given), and perhaps offering general suggestions for consideration in subsequent assignments (e.g., "Great job adding more support for your arguments in your body paragraphs! The conclusion is still underdeveloped, and you need to stay aware of the errors you make in article usage. Let's see if we can work on those things on the next paper").

In one study that asked students about the degree to which they read and paid attention to teacher comments on first drafts versus final drafts, the students clearly indicated that they valued feedback at both stages of the process (Ferris, 1995b). Finally, with many instructors using a portfolio approach to assess student writing (see chapter 8), even "final draft feedback" may not truly be final if the student chooses to revise that paper further. Therefore, it can be worth the instructor's effort to let the writer know where the paper stands and what still could be done to improve its quality.

Endnotes or marginal comments? Arguments can be made on both sides of this issue. Endnotes enable the teacher to summarize his or her reactions to the entire paper. Also, because endnotes are not subject to the space limitations of marginal notes, they can be longer, clearer, less cryptic, and easier to read. Marginal comments, on the other hand, offer immediacy in that they are clearly keyed by proximity to specific ideas in the text. Moreover, marginal notes communicate to the writer the sense of an involved, interested reader engaged in a dialogue with the creator of the text.

We have found that the ideal solution is a combination of both marginal and endnotes. We recommend that instructors, after reading through a student text carefully and selecting feedback points as described earlier, next construct a summary endnote, perhaps in the form of a personal letter to the student (Fig. 5.3). Teachers then can go back through the text making marginal comments that highlight or illustrate the points raised in the endnote, offering praise and other "interested reader" comments. However, if time is short, we recommend privileging the summary endnote over the marginal comments, simply because it provides a comprehensive overview of the paper that tends to be clearer and easier to read.

Praise or Criticism? As noted previously, solid arguments can be posited for incorporating both comments of encouragement and suggestions or constructive criticism into our written commentary. Many teachers like to use the "sandwich" approach to writing endnotes: beginning and ending the note

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Julia,

You did a nice job with this essay. I liked your examples about listening to music and observing nature. You did a great job of discussing Sarton's essay, too.

A couple of suggestions for your next draft:

1. *The paragraph about "sightseeing" is shorter than the other body paragraphs. You might try developing it more fully by including summary and quotation from Sarton's essay that might support or frame your personal experience.*
2. *The paragraph about "College" needs to be more closely connected with the rest of the essay, maybe by specifically mentioning Sarton's essay, and how Yezierska's experience shows "The Rewards of Living a Solitary Life."*
3. *There are a lot of language errors, too. I've highlighted them for you. Be sure to edit carefully!*

Good work! I'll look forward to seeing your next draft!

Best wishes,

Dr. Ferris

FIG. 5.3. Sample summary endnote (letter) to student.

with encouraging remarks (the "bread") and making the two to four feedback points or suggestions in the middle (the "filling"). Figure. 5.3 illustrates this style of commentary. Most instructors also like to write positive comments in the margins of student texts to communicate that they are interested, engaged readers.

Questions or Statements? The literature reflects some debate about the formal characteristics of teacher commentary and even about whether such considerations are important (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Following strongly worded cautions in the L1 response literature about the danger of appropriating student texts through overly directive teacher commentary (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982; Sperling & Freedman, 1987), both L1 and L2 composition professionals have, since the 1980s, been explicitly trained to use questions rather than imperatives or statements in responding to student writers, both to encourage students to think more clearly and critically about their ideas (or, as Sommers [1982] put it, "forcing students back into the chaos" [p. 154]) and to communicate through the form of their comments that authority and ownership of the paper still belong to the student writer.

For some ESL writers, particularly those educated in their home countries, teacher questions can cause both pragmatic and cultural confusion. Whereas NS writers can easily recognize an indirect comment such as "Can you give an example here?" as a politely phrased teacher request rather than a "real" question (akin to "Can you shut the door?"), students less experienced with English pragmatic phenomena or North American teachers' desire to assume a nonappropriative stance may either misinterpret the question as a real yes/no question (possibly answering "no"!) or wonder if the teacher's wishy-washiness is a sign of incompetence or insecurity. The writer may consequently ignore feedback from a teacher for whom they have lost respect. This unfortunate outcome could, in turn, lead to frustration when the teacher receives a revised assignment in which it appears that the student completely ignored a clear, reasonable suggestion.

We are not suggesting by this discussion that instructors should abandon questioning as a commenting strategy. On the contrary, we use questions consistently in feedback on our own students' writing. However, we believe that writing teachers should perhaps reexamine their questioning techniques. First, they should not assume that questions are the only or always the best approach for all types of feedback. When writing comments

in the form of questions, teachers might ask themselves three questions: (a) If the student answers this question, will it really improve the effectiveness of the paper? (b) Will the student be able to understand this question's intent and form? (c) On a rhetorical level, will the student know how to incorporate the answer to this question into his or her evolving draft? One practical approach to this final issue is to pair questions with statements explicitly suggesting revision, but perhaps hedging the suggestion ("Maybe you could...").

Content or Form? Another area of disagreement in the literature concerns whether L2 writing teachers should avoid mixing commentary on students' ideas and content with feedback on their errors or the linguistic form of their texts. As we have already discussed, it is neither necessary nor desirable for a teacher to respond to every problem on every draft of a student essay. Chapter 7 discusses in detail how teachers might approach the challenging task of error correction and how they might effectively combine feedback on form with explicit grammar instruction and strategy training to build independent self-editing skills.

Although the chapter division in this volume explicitly separates the issues of responding to student content and responding to lexical and syntactic problems (as does most research), it is important to note that the oft-cited dichotomy between content and form is largely artificial. For instance, consistent errors in verb tense and aspect inflection (form) can cause confusion for the reader about the time frame or immediacy of the action (content). Inaccurate lexical choices (form) can cause major problems in the overall comprehensibility of a text, causing the reader to be unsure of what the writer intended to express (content). Nonetheless, because teachers' strategies for detecting and marking lexical and syntactic errors tend to be different from their strategies for responding to content issues, the techniques that can be used warrant a separate discussion.

It is also important to acknowledge that in the available L2 research to date, no empirical evidence suggests that L2 writers will ignore teacher feedback on content if errors are also addressed in the same draft of an assignment, or that they cannot simultaneously make successful revisions in both content and formal accuracy. On the contrary, we can cite evidence that student writers who received feedback on both content and form improved in both areas during revision (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997). In any case, the principle of personalized or individualized feedback (Fig. 5.1, principle 7) should guide teachers here: Teachers should give each student what he or she most needs on a particular assignment at a specific point in time, rather than follow prescriptions such as "Never mix feedback on content with feedback on form."

Follow-Up

An aspect of the response cycle that teachers may neglect to incorporate is follow-up. That is, we should ensure that students understand the feedback we have given them, helping students with revision strategies after receiving feedback and holding students accountable through the writing process and marking scheme. These strategies and tools should explicitly guide students in reading and understanding the feedback they have been given (see chapter 6 for further discussion of techniques for holding students accountable for peer response). Regrettably, teachers often simply return marked papers to students at the end of class or via e-mail, saying "The next draft is due 1 week from today." This lack of attention to follow-up is unfortunate because it fails to recognize that students may not understand the comments we have made despite our best attempts to be clear, that students may not know how to revise skillfully even if they understand our feedback, and that students may not be highly motivated to exert themselves during revision, preferring instead to make minor microlevel changes that can be done at the computer in a matter of minutes.

The first step in ensuring that students understand our written feedback is, of course, to do a careful job of constructing it. If we are so hasty, careless, or exhausted that students cannot understand what we are trying to tell them, we might as well not bother responding at all. It should be obvious that feedback that is incomprehensible to students cannot help them. Nonetheless, even when we are careful and systematic, all human communication can and does misfire at times, particularly when participants in the exchange include novice writers composing in their second language. We should also make the humbling observation that writing teachers, no matter how experienced, can misunderstand their students' intentions and purposes. Consequently, they may write comments that are off the point, inaccurate, or unhelpful. With these inevitable communication pitfalls in mind, we should allow students time in class to read over our feedback and to

ask questions about it immediately, or we should ask them to write a one- to two-paragraph response to our feedback articulating what they think the main points of our feedback might be.

Students should also receive explicit classroom instruction on revision strategies, both in general and specifically on how to take suggestions from an expert or peer reader and to use them to make effective changes in their evolving texts. At the same time, writers should be assured that they are the authors of their work, and that the final decisions about revisions should remain in their hands. In other words, they should be given explicit permission to disregard suggestions that they find unhelpful or with which they disagree.

We recommend several ways to hold students accountable for taking feedback seriously. One method requires that students include with revisions a cover memo explaining how they have or have not incorporated their teacher's suggestions and why. Another requires students to turn in folders or miniportfolios of ongoing writing projects so that teachers can compare earlier drafts with later drafts (and be reminded of their own previous suggestions). Teachers can choose to make comments about the quality and effort demonstrated in student revisions or actually make such good-faith effort part of the course grading scheme.

Written Commentary: Summary

Research on written teacher commentary has helped us identify issues to consider and possible strategies for providing feedback that is transparent, helpful, encouraging, and constructive. To summarize, insights from research and practice include the following:

- Teachers should identify and articulate—to themselves and to their students—their purposes for and philosophies (or theories) of response to student writing.
- Teachers can use different sources of information (course grading rubric, assignment specifications, prior classroom instruction, individual student needs) to examine student writing and then select and prioritize feedback points about which to write comments.

- The ideal approach to commentary involves a thoughtful mix of a summary endnote and marginal comments. However, if teachers have time for only one mode of response, they should opt for endnotes.
- Feedback should optimally include a fair balance of praise and constructive criticism.
- Especially for L2 writers, teachers should consider the formal characteristics of their comments (questions, jargon, and so forth) to ensure that their comments are clear and comprehensible.
- Teachers may wish to prioritize comments about content over feedback concerning language errors on different drafts of student papers, or they may choose to provide a combination of both feedback types on all drafts.
- Teachers should also be intentional in making sure that students understand their feedback and that they use it effectively in revision and future writing tasks.

TEACHER–STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCES

Another important means of giving feedback and instruction to writing students is through one-to-one writing conferences. Over the past several decades, the writing conference has achieved widespread popularity as a teaching tool for several reasons. One concerns the perception that writing conferences save teachers time and energy that would otherwise be spent marking student papers. Another is the immediacy and potential for interaction and negotiation that the conferencing event offers, allowing for on-the-spot clarification of difficult issues (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999) and helping teachers to avoid appropriating student texts (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). Finally, with the consideration given in recent years to students' learning styles (Reid, 1995b; see chapter 1), it is argued that writing conferences offer a more effective means for communicating with students who are auditory rather than visual learners. Some writing instructors feel so strongly about the value of writing conferences that they have suggested doing away with all other forms of in-class instruction to make time for them (Carnicelli, 1980; Garrison, 1974).

Research on Teacher–Student Writing Conferences: Empirical Trends

A number of researchers have described various aspects of conferencing, including attitudes toward and advantages of teacher–student writing conferences, the discourse of writing conferences, the outcomes and effects of the conferences, and the differing roles and behaviors of teachers and students during conferences. Early researchers (Arndt, 1993; Carnicelli, 1980; Sokmen, 1988; Zamel, 1985) examined students' or teachers' attitudes toward conferencing, concluding with strong endorsements of writing conferences as pedagogical tools because students can ask for on-the-spot clarification, and because "dynamic interchange and negotiation" can take place (Zamel, 1985, p. 97). Arndt (1993) also found that students wanted both written comments and conferences, whereas their teachers preferred conferences.

Conferencing Techniques: Suggestions and Criticisms

Early process-oriented concerns, particularly the desire to avoid appropriating students' texts or dictating the terms of the revisions, led to specific suggestions and guidelines for conducting teacher–student writing conferences. For instance, Murray (1985) encouraged teachers to allow students to take the lead in conferences by eliciting student writers' responses to their own writing before offering any feedback or evaluation, a procedure characterized by Newkirk (1995) as indirect. Similarly, Harris (1986) presented a list of nondirective strategies to guide teachers in their one-to-one interactions with students.

However, some composition theorists have expressed concern that in empowering students to retain ownership of their writing, we force them into roles for which they are not prepared and with which they are not comfortable (Arndt, 1993; Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Delpit, 1988; Newkirk, 1995; Silva, 1997). In ESL writing research, scholars have argued that nondirective approaches to teaching and responding to student writing leave L2 writers ill-prepared to deal with the demands for either linguistic accuracy or the literate and critical skills expected by subject matter faculty in the disciplines (Eskey, 1983; Ferris, 1995b, 1997; Horowitz, 1986c; Johns, 1995a).

Most previous research on response to ESL student writing has examined teachers' written feedback, but it is safe to assume that some students may have problems adequately comprehending oral feedback, even though the conference format allows them increased opportunities to request clarification. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) pointed out that "ESL students bring with them diverse cultures and languages that potentially affect how students conference [and] how their teachers respond to them" (p. 459). For instance, some students may have strong inhibitions against questioning or challenging a teacher in any situation, especially a one-to-one conference. Meanwhile, others may feel that teachers' comments or corrections are to be incorporated verbatim into their texts because of instructors' presumed superior knowledge and authority. Arndt (1993), who compared teachers' and English as a foreign language (EFL) students' reactions to written commentary and conferences, noted that the potential for miscommunication existed in both modes, and that not all students were naturals at "the art of conferencing" (p. 100).

Implementing Writing Conferences: Issues and Options

If a teacher wishes to incorporate writing conferences into a composition or literacy course, several practical issues are worth considering. The first is whether to provide feedback to all students in this manner. Some students would no doubt enjoy the opportunity to discuss their writing in person with their teacher, both to get individual attention and to clear up any problems. Meanwhile, others might prefer written feedback because they find one-to-one discussions with their instructor intimidating, because they prefer seeing feedback in writing, or because they might forget what they have discussed with the teacher during the conference.

Several options are available for addressing these challenges. A teacher can ask students at the beginning of the term whether they prefer written or oral feedback or some combination of both (e.g., in a needs assessment; see chapter 3). For students who are unsure, the teacher can provide written feedback on one assignment and oral feedback on the next. For students who feel nervous about conference dynamics, ideas to relieve their anxieties include conferencing with pairs of students (also adding a peer feedback dynamic to the mix) and allowing students to audiotape or take notes during the conference.

Logistics: When, Where, and How Often?

Along with the question of whom to involve in conferences, a teacher must decide when, where, and how often to hold such conferences. Options range from holding conferences every week or at every class session (the "Garrison Method," in which students write during class and come up to the teacher's desk for a conference whenever they feel the need) to holding them at regular intervals (e.g., seeing each student during office hours on a 3- to 4-week rotation) to requiring students to come in at least once during class sessions for a conference to making conferences completely optional and holding them only at the student's request.

Decisions about frequency and time frames depend on logistical constraints such as scheduling and office space. If a teacher has an office and holds regular office hours, scheduled office time can be the best way to hold conferences. Some instructors occasionally cancel classes to hold conferences with hard-to-schedule students. However, many part-time ESL literacy instructors have neither an office nor office hours. If teachers in this situation wish to hold one-to-one conferences, they most likely have to do so during class time, a situation that requires careful planning because the other students need to be productively engaged while the teacher holds individual discussions. Alternatively, as discussed in chapter 9, the computer writing lab can be an ideal setting for one-to-one teacher–student interaction because students work at individual terminals, and the teacher can move around the room to hold brief conferences as the need arises and inclination leads.

What Topics Should Conferences Cover?

Once the teacher has overcome the logistical obstacles, it is important to prepare and plan for conferences. What to discuss during conferences will vary according to the context of the conference. For instance, if the conference is student-initiated, the student may well have a particular question to discuss or problem to resolve. If the teacher has scheduled a conference, the options for topics to discuss range from a holistic reaction to the student's latest draft to a specific discussion of a particular writing problem or a teaching point covered in class. If the teacher has an opportunity to prepare ahead of time for a conference, he or she might

make notes on particular issues that have arisen during class or that he or she has noted in previous papers. Alternatively, if discussing a particular assignment, the teacher may want to read through the text and make a few notes or check marks in the margins as reminders of items to discuss.

How Should Conference Dynamics Be Shaped?

Another pedagogical issue concerns the dynamics of teacher–student writing conferences, specifically, the relative proportion of talk by teacher and student as well as instructor directiveness (or lack thereof). Studies focusing on this issue have suggested that teacher–student conferences are most successful (with "success" not always operationally defined) when the writer makes a significant contribution to the conference, meaning that he or she participates fully in the discussion instead of sitting passively as the teacher dispenses criticism and advice. Moreover, researchers have suggested that when teachers avoid being overly directive in the conference setting, students can participate more fully, negotiate meaning more effectively, and ultimately produce texts that result from their own thought processes (presumably influenced by the teacher's input) rather than from verbatim reflections of the teacher's oral feedback. Specific ways to encourage students to participate and avoid being overly directive include asking questions (e.g., "What do you think about this paper?" and "Can you explain in another way what you were trying to say here?"), actively eliciting student participation ("Do you have any questions or issues to bring up?"), and allowing occasional silences so the student can formulate and articulate his or her thoughts.

SUMMARY

In L1 and L2 studies of teachers' feedback on student writing, a range of theoretical and practical questions have been examined:

- At what point or points in the writing process should a teacher intervene (if at all)?
- What are the differences between appropriation and intervention in responding to student writing?

- Should feedback related to content and organization be given separately from comments and corrections on form (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so on)?
- To what extent is written or oral feedback more effective in a given context?
- How should teachers identify, select, and prioritize feedback points for their commentary?
- What is the appropriate balance between praise and constructive criticism?
- Are marginal comments more helpful than end comments, or are both necessary?
- How can teachers write clear, helpful comments and conduct effective conferences?
- What problems do ESL students experience in understanding teacher feedback, and how should teachers endeavor to mitigate these problems?

Teacher response to student writing is important at all levels and in all instructional contexts. However, responding effectively to student writing is a skill that can elude even experienced teachers. Like any other form of interpersonal communication, teachers' written responses to their students' writing vary considerably according to the needs, personalities, and abilities of the participants (i.e., the teacher and student) and according to the context (i.e., the course, institutional goals, constraints of the particular assignment, point in the course at which the feedback is being given, and so forth). Because of this variation, we must understand the underlying issues and considerations that constrain our responses. Providing written feedback on student writing is a skill that can improve with practice and reflection. To gauge our effectiveness, of course, we must rely on information from our students and on continuous assessment of ultimate outcomes.

REFLECTION AND REVIEW

1. If you were planning a composition course syllabus, what are some of the options that you might consider about when and how students should receive feedback? How might you balance some of these alternatives over the course of a quarter- or semester-long course?
2. What aspects of teacher feedback might be unique to (or at least more pronounced for) L2 writers? How might you adapt your feedback strategies between a mainstream (L1) composition course and an ESL course—or a course that serves both L1 and L2 student writers?
3. To what extent is the issue of teacher appropriation of student writing a serious one for the teaching of ESL writing? Why do you think so?
4. What are your evolving views on the question of whether to separate content-focused feedback and form-focused feedback or not?
5. What are the advantages of using a rubric or checklist as part of your system for giving feedback to your students? Are there any potential drawbacks or dangers in doing so, and what might be some ways to mitigate these risks?
6. What are the advantages of written commentary over one-on-one conferences? At this stage in your teaching career, do you have a preference or a mode that you prefer? Why?

Application Activity 5.1: Analyzing a Rubric and Creating a Checklist

Directions. Appendix 5A presents a holistic scoring rubric and an essay feedback checklist that was derived from it. Examine the content and the format of the checklist, looking for explicit connections between it and the rubric. Then, using the paragraph rubric in Fig. 8.1, or other rubrics you might have available to you, design a checklist that you might use for identifying feedback points in a student writing sample as you give commentary.

Application Activity 5.2: Examining a Student Paper, Selecting Feedback Points, and Constructing An Endnote

Directions. A student first draft appears in Appendix 5B. Read the writing sample carefully. Using the rubric and checklist in Appendix 5A and the assignment prompt as a starting point, identify one to two strengths and two to four feedback points (suggestions or constructive criticisms to facilitate revision). Then, following

the example shown in Fig. 5.2, write a summary endnote to the student.

Application Activity 5.3: Constructing Commentary

Directions. Appendix 5C presents one student paper with teacher commentary, followed by three unmarked student papers. Read the samples carefully, and then construct commentary for each of the three unmarked papers using a combination of marginal comments and endnotes. (You may wish to make extra "scratch" copies of the papers.) Compose an analysis of your experience, considering the following questions:

- What principles guided you as you read and responded to the student papers?
- What practical decisions did you make (use of checklist, questions, comments about language errors, and so forth) and why?
- What struggles, if any, did you have in responding to the student papers?
- What questions or concerns do you have about responding effectively to student writing in the future?

NOTES

[1]One of the authors (Ferris) was recently asked to give a workshop on the assigned topic of "Giving Meaningful Feedback Without Increasing Teacher Workload." In a nutshell, this title expresses the desire of most writing teachers: They truly want to help their students improve through their feedback, but they do not want to become "composition slaves" (Hairston, 1986).

[2]For a detailed review and critique of this body of studies, see Ferris (2003b), especially Chapter 2.

[3]However, in all cases, students reported that they see language-related feedback as critical, in addition to comments on other aspects of their writing. See chapter 7 for more discussion of this point. Also see Ferris (2003b, Chapter 5) for a more in-depth review of this student survey research.

[4]One could argue, however, for also providing summative feedback on a final draft if such feedback is intended to help the writer reflect on lessons learned that can be applied to future writing projects.

APPENDIX 5A: COURSE RUBRIC AND ESSAY CHECKLIST

SCORES	CHARACTERISTICS OF PAPER RECEIVING THIS SCORE
6	**Demonstrates clear competence in development, organization and sentence structure.** • clearly addresses assignment with thoughtful thesis • is well organized and developed, using appropriate and effective details and analysis to support the thesis • demonstrates thorough understanding of the issues presented in the reading; documents sources of ideas and quotations • consistently uses language well: varied sentences and precise word choice • grammatical errors are rare and do not interfere with effectiveness of paper
5	**Demonstrates competence in development, organization, and sentence structure, but will have errors.** • addresses assignment with clear thesis • is generally well organized and developed, using effective details and analysis to support thesis • demonstrates competent understanding of the issues presented in the reading; documents sources of ideas and quotations • generally uses language well: varied sentences and clear and appropriate word choice • grammatical errors may occur throughout but are not serious and do not interfere with understanding
4	**Demonstrates minimal competence in development, organization, and sentence structure, but will probably have weaknesses in one or more areas.** • addresses assignment adequately with thesis, though it may be imprecisely worded or insufficiently focused

(Continued)

SCORES	CHARACTERISTICS OF PAPER RECEIVING THIS SCORE
	• is adequately organized and developed using details and analysis, though development may be thin at times • demonstrates adequate understanding of the issues presented in the reading; documents sources of ideas or quotations • uses language adequately: reasonable command of sentence structure and word choice • may contain varied grammatical errors, but not to the point of interfering with understanding
3	**Demonstrates developing competence in writing, but remains flawed in development, organization, or language.** • may not respond adequately to the topic or be sufficiently focused • may not be adequately organized or developed, be illogical, or have insufficient or inappropriate support for thesis • may demonstrate lack of understanding of the issues presented in the reading; may fail to document sources of ideas or quotations • may have an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and word choice and form, may have an accumulation of grammatical errors; errors may interfere with understanding.
2	**Demonstrates serious problems in writing.** • does not deal adequately with topic; may be off the point, unclear, or poorly focused • may have serious problems with organization and development, use little or no detail, or have irrelevant specifics or unsupported generalizations • may demonstrate serious misunderstanding of the issues presented in reading; may fail to document sources of ideas or quotations • may have serious and frequent errors in sentence structure and word choice and form • may have an accumulation of serious grammatical errors that interfere with understanding

(Continued)

SCORES	CHARACTERISTICS OF PAPER RECEIVING THIS SCORE
1	**Demonstrates incompetence in writing.** • may be unfocused, confusing, or incoherent or completely misunderstand the issues presented in the reading • may be severely underdeveloped • may contain severe and persistent errors that interfere with understanding

Source: California State University, Sacramento, Dept. of English: Course Grading Rubric for English 109E: Writing for Proficiency. See also Ferris, 2001b.

Sample Essay Feedback Checklist

I. Response to Prompt/Assignment

____ The paper responds clearly and completely to the specific instructions in the prompt or assignment.
____ The essay stays clearly focused on the topic throughout.

II. Content (Ideas)

____ The essay has a clear main idea or thesis.
____ The thesis is well supported with several major points or arguments.
____ The supporting points are developed with ideas from the readings, facts, or other examples from the writer's own experiences or observations.
____ The arguments or examples are clear and logical.
____ Opposing viewpoints have been considered and responded to clearly and effectively.

III. Use of Readings

____ The writer has incorporated other texts into his/her essay.
____ The ideas in the readings have been reported accurately.
____ The writer has used summary, paraphrase, and quotations from the readings to strengthen his/her paper.

(Continued)

____ The writer has mastered the mechanics of incorporating ideas from other texts, including accurate use of quotation marks and other punctuation, accurate verb tenses, appropriate identification of the author and title, and effective integration of quotations into the writer's own text.

IV. Organization

____ There is a clear beginning (introduction), middle (body), and end (conclusion) to the essay.
____ The beginning introduces the topic and clearly expresses the main idea.
____ The body paragraphs include topic sentences that are directly tied to the main idea (thesis).
____ Each body paragraph is well organized and includes a topic sentence, supporting details, and a summary of the ideas.
____ Coherence devices (transitions, repetition, synonyms, pronoun reference, etc.) are used effectively within and between paragraphs.
____ The conclusion ties the ideas in the body back to the thesis and summarizes why the issue is interesting or important.

V. Language & Mechanics

____ The paper is spell-checked (typed essays only).
____ The paper is proof-read and does not have serious and frequent errors in grammar, spelling, typing, or punctuation.
____ The paper is double-spaced and has appropriate margins all around.
____ The paper is legible (handwritten papers).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Source: Ferris (2003, FIG. 6.3, p. 120).

APPENDIX 5B: SAMPLE STUDENT PAPER

Assignment: Relating a Reading to Personal Experience

For your essay assignment, you will *compare and contrast the ideas in one (or more) of the readings in your textbook with your own ideas or experiences.*

To do this, you will need to BOTH clearly summarize what the author(s) say in their text(s) AND clearly describe your own personal experience, explaining how it is similar to or different from what the author(s) discuss(es).

My Adaptation to a New Culture

My thoughts, feelings, and attitudes had adjusted to the United States culture. It was difficult at the very beginning when I first stepped foot in the United States. I expected to meet many new friends, but I also ran into some difficulties which made me realized that there were some barriers I need to adjust. These barriers, discussed in LaRay M. Barna's essay, "Intercultural Communication Stumbling Blocks," are experiences related to me which I will share.

One of the Vietnamese student mentioned in Barna's essay that Americans are superficial and they smile and talk too much. Not only do they smile and talk too much, they also express their feelings emotionally. Truly, I observed and experienced how one American overly express her feelings and emotions toward one simple, ordinary conversation. I did not know what triggered her to express so emotionally, but I did not want to be rude by just staring at her with my mouth open, so I respond by smiling.

There are many more barriers to face when adapting to a new culture. For instance, according to Barna's essay, "the lack of comprehension of obvious nonverbal signs and symbols such as gestures, postures, and vocalizations" (Paragraph 2) are even more difficult to comprehend than facing the questionable feelings why Americans laugh so emotionally and why some treat others so friendly. A thumb sticking up could mean "alright" or "way to go," but what does a toss of a hair mean? I constantly watched one of my American classmate toss her hair back every time she walked by me. I didn't understand what it meant, but one of my

American friends told me that a toss of a hair back means a sign of jealousy and hatred. Could it be that once I accidently placed my legs out too far from under the table, and she tripped over it? Since then, I still didn't understand why she felt that way and I didn't ask.

Another barrier Barna had mentioned is language. The American slangs and dialects that cause difficulty for international students to relate with American students. International students like to stick together because they could communicate with one another better. If an American student use slang words like "word up" or "chill" in their conversations with a foreigner, that could end up with misscommunication or no communication at all. I agree with Barna in his essay when he mentioned that English is impossible to cope with and that's why some foreign students waved it aside. That's how I coped with English when I first arrived to the United States. I didn't understand the American's dialect and slangs and I try possibly to avoid the

Adapting to a new culture is a new experience. We do not have to act or be like the Americans, but to adjust and be familiar with the culture. I agree with Barna in his essay that "each person's culture, his own way of life, always seems right, proper, and natural." (Paragraph 13) We can stick with our own believes, values, and traditions. We can also stick to the new culture's. What I belive is when we adapt to a new culture, we are not losing our own culture, but we are gaining new experiences and other people's way of living. When I lived here in the United States, I've learned a lot. I've adapted to their culture and I met many new friends. I will still be adapting to the culture because there will always be something new.

APPENDIX 5C: SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAYS AND TEACHER COMMENTARY

Note: The four papers following were written for a university ESL writing course titled "Writing for Proficiency" (see Ferris, 2001b). See also Appendix 5A for the grading rubric for this course; the prompt is reproduced in the box below. The essays were written in 50 minutes in class during the first week of the semester. Students had been given the reading and some prewriting questions to consider in advance.

> Please read the attached article by Terry Lee Goodrich [en]titled "Lies are so commonplace, they almost seem like the truth." Then write a clear, well-organized essay that responds to the following question:
>
> *Is lying always wrong? Why or why not?*
>
> Be sure to consider both sides of the issue as you explain your opinion. References to the article — facts, quotations, summary, and so on — are required.

Note: The first essay has been marked by a teacher with marginal and end comments; it is followed by a brief analysis. The remaining three essays are for responding practice (see Application Activity 5.3).

Who is Goodrich?

Lying is not always wrong, if it is used for good intentions. Lying can be very manipulative, yet that particular quality, Goodrich mentioned, "is also exciting". Instead of using it for evil, lying can be a vital source for good, whether it from sparing a child feelings or doing it just to get something out of it. There are numerous explanations why people would create white lies. One reason why people lie is to surprise or distract a love one. Another reason why people do it is to create a diversion, in order to escape the difficulties that may take place by telling the truth.

Good clear response to the essay question

Nice example of a "white lie"

There is no greater rush than getting away with a good, harmless lie. For example, on one occasion, I have used lies for good intention. My close friend birthday was coming up. My friends and I were planning a surprise birthday. We did not want the birthday girl to know of this, so we manipulated her into thinking that we did not remember her birthday. Making up stories that we were busy on that day, to convince her so. Seeing the hurt in her eyes further greaten our smile. Like Goodrich said, "even though people lie for good reason, lying can be harmful". My friends and I knew that by lying to her, the surprise party would be a total success. Yes, our way of springing the party on her was wrong, but when the surprise was successful, seeing the joy on her face gave everyone involve a great rush, and that is exciting

is getting a "great rush" good if it hurts someone's feelings?

What might you do differently next time?

Good example of lying to spare someone from hurt feelings!

When Goodrich said that, "everyone lie" it could very well be the truth. People lie constantly to avoid difficult situation by telling the truth. For instant, I was at my friends' house for dinner. His mother was cooking her best dish that took hours to make. During the course of the meal she asked me how was it. The truth is that I didn't like it, maybe is because I hate shrimp, but to avoid being an unwanted guess, I bit my lips and told her that the meal was excellent. Besides my stomach hurting from the shrimp, no feelings got hurt.

Lies are "exciting, fun, and a great thrill"—but "no one really liks to lie"? This is conflusing.

When might lies be "damaging"?

To conclude, small, harmless lies can be exciting and fun. Not knowing if you will get caught in a lie, or knowing that you just got away with a lie is a great thrill. The truth is, some lies can be damaging when it is discovered, but if done properly, lies can be very benificial. No one really likes to lie, but not everyone is aware that they are lying. Lying is not always wrong.

Lucy,

You did a nice job of taking a clear stand on the essay question by saying that "lying is not always wrong." Your two examples—the surprise party and the shrimp dish—were both effective in illustrating times when a lie may be harmless and even beneficial.

There are a couple of issues you need to think about as you write your next draft:

(1) You need to consider also times when lying is harmful. You hint at this a couple of times in your introduction and conclusion by saying that lying can be "manipulative" and "damaging," but the rest of your essay presents a very positive view of lying. I'd suggest adding a paragraph or two that defines the types of lies that are harmful and provides an example or two. You should also look carefully at the article, which discusses both the positive and negative aspects of lying, and see if there are ideas, examples, or quotations that might help you present a more two-sided argument.

(2) The story about your friend's birthday is a bit confusing. You are honest about the fact that your lying caused her pain, and you even describe it as "wrong," yet you present it as an example of when lying can be beneficial. See if you can make this clearer by explaining either (a) what you might have done differently or better; or (b) why you think the positive aspects of the surprise "erased" the hurt she felt when she thought you had forgotten her birthday.

(3) You need to use Goodrich's article more in your essay. Be sure to introduce it clearly at the beginning—author's full name, article title, and a brief summary of the main idea(s)—and see if you can use facts, examples, or specific quotations to support your own arguments and examples throughout the paper.

You are off to a great start with clear organization and nice examples. I will look forward to reading your next draft! Be sure to e-mail me, talk to me in class, or come by my office if you need any help as you revise!

Good luck!

Teacher

Source: Ferris, Kennedy, & Senna 2003 Research Corpus, Essays 1-4. Used with student permission.

STUDENT ESSAYS 2–4 (Provided for Responding Practice)

Essay 2

In an everyday going, many people lie all the time. There are many reasons why people lie. They lie to protect themselves, to protect others, to get attention, to get things they desire or want. In my opinion, lying is a part of everybody's daily routine, such as waking up in the morning, eating, going to work or school, and sleeping. A daily routine of lying can be simple as telling your mom that you are not able to go home early due to a group study, but instead you're going out with your friends to a perty. This is the type of lie that many people often do everyday of there lives, and it is normal. I believe that lies are not always harmful, and it is appropriate sometimes. However, everybody should set limits and boundaries to determine whether a lie should be acceptable or not.

In the article,"Lies Are So Commonplace, They Almost Seem Like The Truth" Goodrich states that many people lie for good reasons, but lying can be hurtful and risky if the lies are discovered and it can destroy the trust and the relationship with the peson. I agree with this statement because everybody should know the consequences from lying, even if the lie is simple or serious. For example, I was in a relationship for five and a half years. At the last year of our relationship, he constantly made excuses that he was busy and could not spend time with me.

Afterward, I had found out that all the times that he had refused to go out with me, he was out with my best friend. They had been seeing each other for several months. I was very devistated and hurt. I couldn't believe it. They've been lying to me for so long that I felt so stupied. In this type of situation, the lie will soon be discovered. I believe that this type of lie is unacceptable and it should not be a daily routine.

Overall, lying is something that everybody will do as a part of growing up. A harmful lie or an appropriate lie depends on how an individual use it.

Essay 3

In my past experiences I have come across so many people that lie for so many different reasons. Their are certain lies that does not have major consequences, but their are some that could destroy you, or a relationship. Their are lies that are very harmful, their are appropriate lies, and their are lies that do not effect either party.

Most lies can be very harmful, whether its on your body or to someone else. "But even hough people lie for good reasons, lying can be harmful." Lies can destroy the trust between people. Their are people who would for a close friend or family member to protect them, but this can have very serious consequences. It could put you in prison. Also Goodrich said that "lying is hard on the brain because one lie leads to another and we always have to remember our false story." (Lies are so commonplace, Goodrich)

Although, most lies can have really bad consequences, their are times when lying is appropriate. "We fudge on how old we are, how much we weigh, what we are paid. Some people tell their children that Santa Claus will com on Christmas eve." Like Goodrich said these lies do not have serious consequences. Peole to get out of going out with them. This is not justified, but we all do it at one point or another, sometimes what out even

noticing it. Parents lie to their kids all the time in order to scare them or protect them. Kids constently lie to their parents, sometimes it because thay want to get out of explaining their selves. Their have been many time if I was going to movies with a friend, I would tell my parents that I was goung to study so I didn't have explain my self. People call in sick to work because something came up and they rather be their than at work, so they call and make up a story about why they cant be at work. (lies are so commonplace, they almost seem like the truth, Goodrich).

Their are people who would lie for any given reason. They do it because its exciting, its dangerous. I have a friend who lies to make her interesting. She will change her stories to make people listen. Their are times that said lied about thing that do not effect me or relate to me in any way. "We also lie to make people agree with us without really realizing that we're doing so." I think lying comes naturally to certain people, they do not have to think about it. (lies are so common place, thy almost seem like the truth, David Welsh).

Whatever the motivation, people lie on every day basis. Some do it to protect themselves. Some do it to protect other, whether their children or friend. And their are some that do it for the excitement, or to be important.

Essay 4

Sometime lie can be appropiated because, if a person had to lie for a good reason then its alright. A good reason to lie may also be harmful. In this case, lies are harmful.

Lying to someone can be harmful at the same time it can be appropriated. Sometime people have to lie because they dont want to get in trouble. Lying is appropriated when a person is lying in a good way. When I ask a friend to have lunch with me tomorrow, and she responded by saying I have to work late tomorrow, but she actually got out of work early. She lied because she did not want to hurt my feeling by saying she have other plan. This way of lying can be appropriated because it's used in a way of not wanting to hurt a friend feeling. Lies can be appropriated when using it for a good reason, but lying is always is going to be harmful to everyone, even when using it as a good reason.

When or where a person may lie the truth may be still known, when the truth comes out lies may be harmful. Lying is harmful, it may add excitment to a person life, but at the same time it can destroy a person life.

Some time people tell the storie about Santa Clause coming down the chimney on Christmas eve and give present to good little boys and girls. Children around the world probably heard this stories about old St. Nick. The stories is just to make children believe in old St. Nick, when when children are grown to a certain age and realize that the stories was a lie, then it break their heart. Lying can be misleading. I think that lies are so common that people don't realized that people are telling the truth sometime.

I remember that my sister lies to my parent about going to the store to get some vegetable, and would be back in 30 min. My parent waited for the vegetable for an hours. She would never show up with the vegetable intill two hour later.

She lied to my parent. My parent would not trust het to go grocery shopping again.

By lying to my parent she causes my parent not to trust her again.

Lying is harmful because it lead others to think of you in a different way. It makes other people judge your trust.

Lying is bad because its misleading you into a wrong decision, making wrong mistake and causing problem when the truth is known.

Chapter 6

Building a Community of Writers: Principles of Peer Response

Questions for Reflection

- *Beyond the specific context of composition courses, what typ of experiences have you had with peer feedback and collaboration, whether in academic or nonacademic settings?*
- *Do you enjoy collaboration with peers? Do you find it helpful? Why or why not?*
- *Considering your own previous experiences with peer feedback (if any), what are the potential benefits of implementing it in an ESL literacy course? What are the possible drawbacks? In what ways (if any) do you think these considerations might differ for L2 students?*

PEER RESPONSE: KUDOS AND CRITICISMS

The brief history of peer response in L2 writing instruction, both as a pedagogical technique and as a research domain, has been somewhat tumultuous. In the 1970s and 1980s, L1 composition