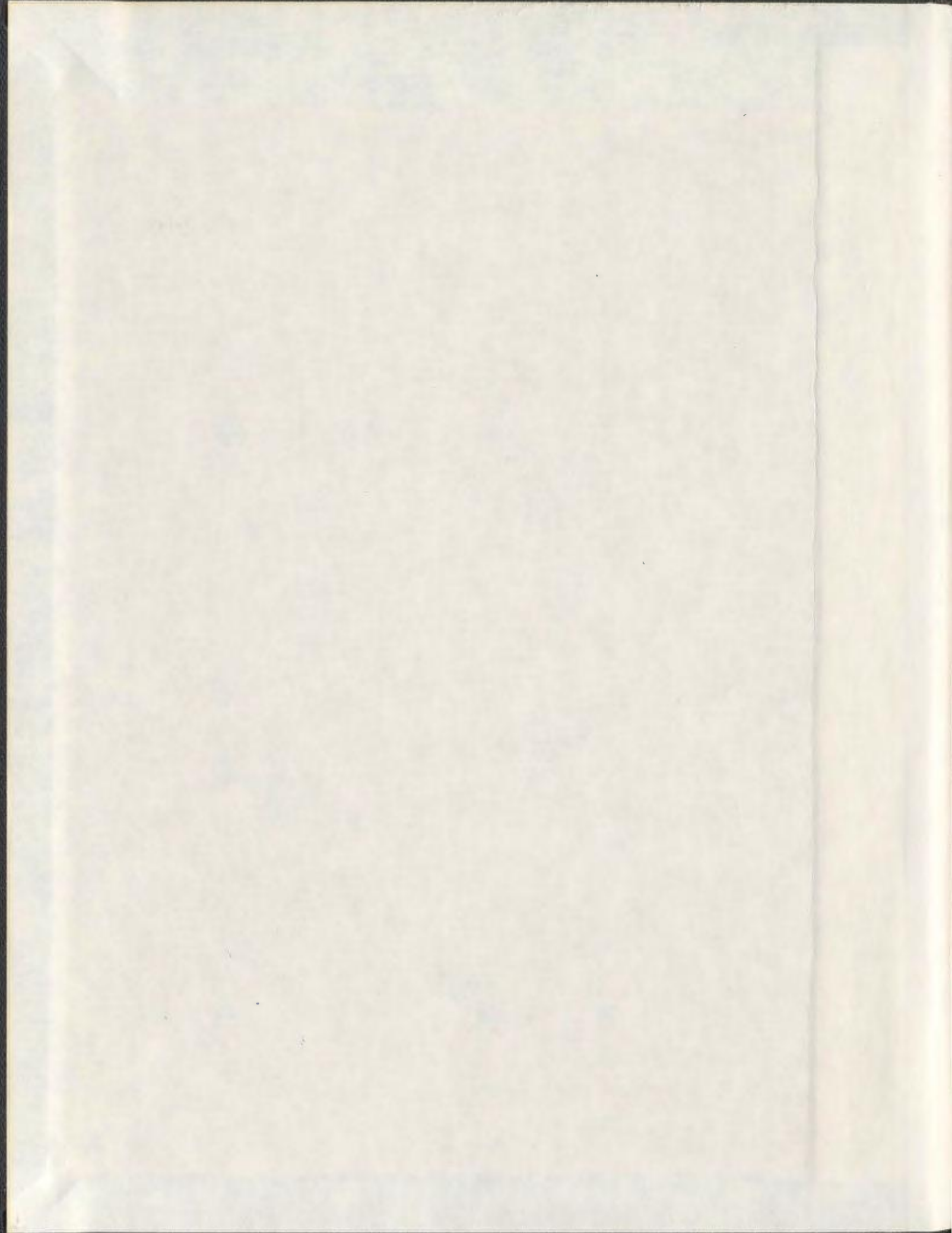# ESL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES WITH PROCESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

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ESL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES WITH PROCESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into English as a second language (ESL) writers' learning experiences from their frame of reference in order to seek pedagogical inspiration and personal growth as a per-course instructor. Specifically, the study investigated their views toward process writing pedagogy, and the challenges they have encountered with revision and with teacher commentary. The study also investigated ESL writers' perceptions of their first-year composition courses and their writing needs in the post-secondary education context. It uncovered five potential constraints that may have a negative impact on teaching and learning.

A qualitative case study approach was employed. Major data sources were 103 survey questionnaires, 56 student interview transcripts, two teacher interview transcripts as well as a range of writing samples and written documents. The incorporation of the survey technique was an attempt to capture diverse voices on the investigated topic and to triangulate the data so that the validity of the findings could be strengthened. Most participants involved appeared to hold a favorable attitude toward process writing pedagogy as well as their writing courses. However, a number of negative views toward this writing instruction were identified. Six main challenges that the participants reported to have encountered or had actually encountered were also identified when they responded to their teacher commentary. The study found that students were unresponsive to teacher commentary in their subsequent revisions not because they disregarded teacher feedback or they disliked revision. Instead, their decisions for not to revise were due to various reasons; some are context-bound and some are individual variables. The results

of the study support Conrad and Goldstein's (2004) claim that contextual factors and personal factors are important to consider when one attempts to develop a better understanding of teacher feedback and student response.

With regard to students' perceptions of their first-year writing courses, more than 80% of the student participants felt that their composition courses were useful and beneficial to help them prepare and handle university writing in a general way. Some students believed that these courses had helped strengthen their English ability and assisted them in producing well-written papers in other courses. The study further identified five potential constraints which are believed to have some negative impacts on these students' learning. It is believed that no single study can possibly capture and truly represent the learning experiences of all ESL students because it is a large, diverse student body. However, accumulated studies, including mine, conducted in this particular area can facilitate building a holistic picture of the challenges and complexities of second language (L2) writing. The findings can also help expand the knowledge base for understanding ESL students' experiences with process writing pedagogy.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the 21st century, one may find it difficult to name a post-secondary educational institution, at least in North America, which does not engage in any sort of internationalization initiatives. In the Canadian context, almost all of the post-secondary institutions have been very actively engaged in internationalizing their campuses (Bartell, 2003). Many initiatives associated with internationalization have taken place, such as building partnerships with overseas institutions, establishing educational joint ventures with partners abroad, providing funding support for Canadian students on a short-term overseas study, and incorporating international content into the existing program curriculum (Altbach & Knight, 2007). We have also witnessed a growing number of international students choosing Canada as their destination to further education. In 2011, it was estimated that there were 239,121 foreign students present in Canada compared to 169,820 students in 2006 (News release, Citizenship and Immigration Canada). 90% of these students are non-native English speaking learners. At Memorial University (MUN) where I work as a sessional writing instructor, the number of international students in 2011 is close to triple the number of that in 2001, leading to a much more diverse international student population on campus.

It is known that university study is often challenging to students (Giridharan & Robson, 2011). English as a Second Language (ESL) learners often experience a much wider range of challenges when studying in an English-speaking milieu, such as cultural

shock, adjustment and language issues, financial stress, and academic difficulties (Andrade, 2006; Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Leki, 2007; Zhang & Mi, 2009). To help facilitate a smoother transition to a new learning environment, educational institutions often provide these students with a range of services and support. For instance, at MUN, several new student service initiatives have been undertaken to accommodate ESL students' diverse needs. These include family programs for international students' children and spouses, an international café for students to meet and chat, and career advising services tailored to each student's specific needs.

However, not much attention has been allocated to examine and evaluate the academic offerings at MUN with respect to their appropriateness for ESL students. For instance, the first-year writing curriculum was created prior to 2002. Since I began teaching the course in 2002, I have not been aware of any program review done on the first–year writing curriculum for potential modifications. After reviewing numerous L2 writing research studies, Leki (2001) was relatively surprised to find very little was documented about students' own voices on their own learning. Several scholars have since emphasized the importance of paying attention to learners' perspectives on teaching and learning (Anderson, Imdieke, & Standerford, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008, 2009; Leki 2001; Macbeath, Myers, & Demetriou, 2001; Rogers, 2007; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004) because "[t]he insights from their world can help us to 'see things that we do not normally pay attention to but that matter to them" (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p. 29). I also share such a belief that paying attention to students' commentaries of their own learning experience and struggle is important and essential, especially in today's higher education

environment because we are facing a much more diversified student population with a wide range of needs (Kielinska, 2006; McGowan & Potter, 2008).

If we want our teaching to be effective and enriching for students, we need to keep an active role in learning what gaps there are, if any, between what we have taught and what the needs of ESL students are. We also need to expand our knowledge base regarding what they bring with them, how they prefer to learn, and what their preferred learning strategies are. By doing so, we can be much more competent to guide students to learn about what is expected in North American academia and to organize our programs to better meet their needs. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to learn what ESL students say about their first-year composition course, what challenges they have encountered in their writing curriculum, and what skills they believe they must have to help manage writing assignments in the post-secondary education context. I also look at the institutional context that may potentially contribute to some of the challenges these students face and seek additional insights into the learning context.

Rationale in Conducting the Research

In the postsecondary context, to write well in English is one of the most daunting tasks for ESL students because they need to develop such competence in a language and cultural context often very different from their own. Many of them struggle with and are fearful about academic writing (Fox, 1994; Giridharan & Robson, 2011; Steinman, 2003; Wasoh, 2013). As an ESL learner myself, I know how frustrated one can feel when one tries hard to acquire a second language but finds that one can never be in total control of the language. Sometimes you may feel you have many good ideas to write about. When

you attempt to write them in a second language, you often find that your written work just does not convey your actual train of thought; the essence of your message seems to be lost in translation. In Silva's (1997) landmark article "on the ethical treatment of ESL students," he has clearly illustrated the writing constraints faced by ESL writers in addition to the obvious linguistic constraint:

> ESL writers' composing processes seem constrained in some salient ways. Because they are not writing in their native language, they may plan less, write with more difficulty owing to a lack of lexical resources, reread what they write less, and exhibit less ability to revise in an intuitive manner— on the basis of what "sounds" right.
> At the discourse level, ESL writers' texts often do not meet the expectations of NES [Native English speaking] readers. Their texts frequently exhibit distinct patterns of exposition, argumentation, and narration; their orientation of readers has been deemed by some to be less appropriate and acceptable, and they sometimes manifest a distinct pattern and less facility in their use of certain cohesive devices. (p. 359-360)

It is widely recognized that good written communication is crucial to one's academic success at the university (Barkas, 2011; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010; Giridharan & Robson, 2011; Hutchings, 2006; Leki, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2003; Zhu, 2004) because writing is often the main channel by which professors assess students' understanding of course work. Strong writing skills are also essential for securing a salaried job after graduation (National Commission on Writing, 2004) and for career success (Zhu, 2004). For instance, Zhu (2004) conducted a study to investigate professors' views on the importance of academic writing in university. All of the professors (from Business and Engineering faculties) involved in the study endorsed the importance of writing in university. These professors also asserted that to be able to convey one's ideas well in writing is crucial to one's success in the real

world and "it's one of the things you are most highly visible for to the people above you" (Zhu, 2004, p. 34).

As an ESL writing instructor, I perceive it to be important to keep myself active in learning about students' needs and challenges in writing. I also have some teaching concerns that I need answers for in order to be an effective instructor. Thus, my personal interest and my pedagogical concern about the investigated issues are the driving force behind this study.

Personal Interests in the Research

I believe ESL students need to be taught specifically about academic writing so that they can be better prepared for the writing demands in tertiary education. Such a belief stems from my own learning experience. I was never taught how to write academically in English in my undergraduate program in Taiwan although my major was in English. When I began my Master's program at the University of Victoria, I always felt that I was expected to know how to write, especially when it was a graduate program. Writing a 20-page paper back then was not a fun experience. No instructors in the classes I had attended ever discussed how to structure papers and what was expected for the paper. It seemed to me that there was an unspoken consensus that we knew how to write proper academic papers. Back then, I felt if I ever asked, I would look dumb and people might think I was not ready for the level of education that I had signed myself up for. My coping strategy was to find it out myself. I would often search for writing samples and writing tips to help me organize the paper. By the time I had all the information deciphered, I was exhausted and my writing had not even begun. When I think back now,

it would have been better that I had asked so that I would not have felt so frustrated. As a writing instructor now, I would like to assist my ESL students and make their learning path much smoother. I also share Silva's (1997) view that students enrolled in first-year writing courses have the right to expect what they learn there to contribute to their academic success.

To accomplish these goals, I first need to listen to what ESL students say about their learning experience in our first-year composition courses and what works for them as well as what does not work for them. I recognize that it is not possible to attend to and fulfill each individual's writing needs in a composition course; however, this should never discourage writing instructors from developing a fuller understanding of students' writing experience and struggles. Every single study, like this one, can help contribute to the body of the knowledge in the field of ESL writing. It also has its pedagogical value to help teachers make modifications in their lessons in order to best meet the needs of the students.

Pedagogical Interests in the Research

The second driving force for conducting this research is to find answers to some teaching issues that I have been confronted with in my own classes. In L2 composition studies, process writing pedagogy is often the dominant teaching method (Atkinson, 2003) although other teaching methods, such as genre pedagogy, have begun to gain popularity in the teaching and learning of L2 writing (Deng, 2011; Hyland, 2007). At the university where I teach, we also adopt process writing pedagogy in our first-year writing courses for ESL students. In a process-oriented class, students are normally required to

write multiple drafts of a paper and to revise each draft based upon their teacher feedback. Hatti and Timperley (2007) have defined feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). Thus, in a process writing classroom, teacher feedback often serves to inform the student writer what has been conveyed and what needs to be worked on more in the student's text. Furthermore, teacher feedback has also been viewed as "a key element of the students' growing control over composing skills" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 1).

It makes sense to me that learning to write in L2 needs revision as learners, including myself, can make numerous unconscious grammatical errors, such as forgetting an "s" when using a third person verb. In the beginning of my teaching career, I was quite enthusiastic about enacting such a teaching approach emphasizing revision, especially when I also had limited knowledge of how to teach writing. Throughout my teaching experience, I have sometimes pondered the effectiveness of process writing instruction due to encountering numerous challenges with this teaching method.

First of all, in the multiple drafts of a composition course, revision is essential. It was not uncommon to encounter a certain number of students who would not act upon comments and would only make minimal or no changes between drafts. Casual conversations with my colleagues also confirmed that I was not the only one who experienced such a challenge. Since I knew little about why students would not spend time revising except my own speculation, I often felt powerless when I encountered such a situation. Also, responding to student work is very labour intensive. It is often

satisfying and rewarding when I see students act upon the written comments and make substantial changes to improve their work. I feel very frustrated and discouraged to read a similar piece of writing from the same student multiple times without any revisions between drafts except some superficial changes. To be more competent in dealing with the aforementioned situation, I need to gain insight into factors that might have dissuaded students from investing in their revision. Such insight can then allow me to work on meaningful modifications to improve teaching and better encourage investment in revision among students.

Secondly, I sometimes encountered some students inquiring why their marks had not improved much between drafts. From their perspective, they had eliminated all the grammatical errors and they deserved a high mark. I often found myself having to come up with good reasons to justify my marks, which makes marking these papers an even more daunting task. There is urgency for me to develop a fuller understanding of how ESL students view process writing pedagogy and their challenges in order to better respond to my students' inquires and to avoid burnout.

Thirdly, I perceive the purpose of first-year composition courses is to help ESL students develop and refine their writing skills so that they are much more confident in managing university writing. I never really know if what ESL students learn in the writing class actually helps them with managing university writing. I also know little about the writing these students are asked to produce outside the ESL composition courses. ESL writers normally learn summary writing, synthesis writing and research paper writing in the composition courses. Is what we teach somewhat helpful for them to

manage the written work for other courses? Are there any particular writing skills that might be very useful for students to have in other university courses but which we have never taught in the writing courses? Gaining insight into what students are actually required to produce in writing for other university courses and what they say about the skills they need can also help writing instructors to adjust lesson plans to best meet their needs.

In short, I care and am passionate about teaching. To be an effective composition instructor, I need to be better informed about how students think of process writing pedagogy and what their challenges are. I also need to learn if the composition course helps them better manage university writing. While interviewing writing teachers or observing first-year writing courses may allow me to collect data for the study, I chose to interview students and listen to what they say. I chose such an approach because students are the ones who possess the lived experience (experience in the first year writing courses) under investigation and because students are often quite capable of informing us what works for them and what does not work in teaching (Cook-Sather, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I align my view toward writing with scholars who take a social-political stance. Like social constructionists, writing scholars with a social-political perspective also perceive writing as a socially constructed activity (Atkinson, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2007). Student writers in higher education are expected to communicate in a certain way for a certain group of people. Scholars with a social political stance also recognize that the education is not neutral (Casanave, 2007) and

"written artifacts are political documents in the sense that they are produced in power-infused settings such as classrooms and discourse communities, and are used to further political as well as intellectual and instructional agendas" (Casanave, 2003, p. 87). To better understand how L2 students learn to write and what challenges they face, scholars who take on a critical stance also look beyond the interactions taking place in the classroom because how an ESL writer learns to write is not only influenced by individual factors and teaching but also by the educational institution (Kalikokha, Strauss, & Smedley, 2009). For example, if an institution has very limited resources and support for ESL students, it is logical to assume that some of these students may experience more challenges in such a setting than in a setting that provides abundant academic support. The potential institutional influence, either positive or negative, on student learning cannot be ignored.

I also exercise reflective practice in the study. The aim is to problematize teaching approaches that cause students difficulties by attending to what students expressed and what I had observed in classes, and reflecting upon my own teaching experience. Some studies completed on reflective practices are structured around teachers keeping a reflective journal on their own teaching practices or a researcher observing the class and then discussing with the class teacher how the teacher did in the class (e.g., Farrell, 2006). Mine is slightly different as I observed how other writing teachers had planned and conducted their lessons, and reflected on aspects of their teaching as well as my own teaching experience. I kept a journal documenting what my own reflections were, and how I felt when I observed the classes, and what strategies

seemed to work or not work in class to seek pedagogical insights. This journal also enabled me to become more aware of my own assumptions when I analyzed my collected data.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into what ESL students say about their writing courses. The specific focus of the study is to explore their views toward process writing pedagogy, the challenges they have encountered, and their writing needs in the post-secondary education context. I also examine the potential institutional influence on these students' learning experience. My study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What experiences did ESL students have in relation to process writing pedagogy?

2. What challenges did ESL students encounter when responding to teacher commentary?

3. Did the writing courses help ESL students manage their writing assignments for other university courses? What skills did ESL students feel that they must have but had not learned from the writing courses?

4. How did the institution alleviate or reinforce the challenges that ESL students experience in the acquisition of academic writing?

Significance of the Study

As a result of internationalizing campuses among Canadian universities, an increasing influx of foreign students have chosen Canada for further education, which

also results in a much more diversified population of ESL students in the first year writing courses. These internationalization efforts also mean that institutions bear more educational responsibility and obligation to ensure these students succeed in the programs.

Abundant research studies have revealed that ESL students often face many challenges in developing writing competence in English (Fox, 1994; East, 2006; Lee & Tajino, 2008; Kalikokha, Strauss, & Smedley, 2009; Leki, 2007; Pecorari, 2003), essential for their academic success and future career options. My study can yield some pedagogical insights into the complexity of ESL academic writing acquisition and the possible gaps between what we teach in the writing classes and what students actually need for university work. These insights will assist ESL educators in advancing and developing new pedagogical approaches to teaching L2 writing.

It is important that we build a comprehensive knowledge base regarding how these students learn to write in an academic setting and what their struggles are along the way so that we can be in a better position to provide relevant guidance to ensure their success and satisfaction. No single study, including mine, can possibly capture the learning experiences of all ESL students because it is a large, diverse student body. Every individual learner is different and unique, and how he/she actually learns can also be impacted from context to context. However, accumulated studies, including mine, conducted in this particular area can facilitate building a holistic picture of the challenges and complexities of L2 writing.

Keeping abreast with writing research findings, writing instructors and curriculum developers can then be better informed in making responsive curriculum and pedagogical decisions. By learning from our students' experiences with process writing pedagogy in their own terms, we can uncover areas that might work and might not work for them. We may learn the weaknesses associated with our own feedback practice. We may also become better informed about why some students chose not to invest in revising their work. Gaining insight into their learning experiences also helps us understand how better to match the skills taught in the writing courses with the writing demands of the disciplinary courses, thereby enabling educators to improve ESL writing curriculum and to be more responsive to these students' needs.

I also believe that the journey of conducting my study can lead to personal growth in my teaching practices. Listening attentively to my participants' stories and struggles in their writing will help me discover things that I would not have known when I was teaching as marking students' papers and other teaching responsibilities often occupied most of my time and energy, disallowing me from listening to the students. The results can lead to more inspiration in my own teaching.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter One introduces my motives as well as the purposes of conducting this study. It describes the theoretical framework and the importance of studies like this one in learning and teaching in higher education. A brief justification on why I chose to listen to students as my primary data and the significance of the present study are also presented.

Chapter Two begins with a discussion of the complexity of university academic writing. It then provides a review of relevant literature on process writing pedagogy. It also provides a review of prior research studies done in the field of teacher feedback and student revision. It delineates the existing research gaps in the field of feedback and revision. The chapter also outlines the contribution of the present study.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the study's methods and provides the rationale for why I chose to conduct surveys as well as interviews. Information regarding the research site, research participants, and the data collection and analysis is then presented. It also illustrates how data was coded in order to generate thematic categories and how the research ethics were followed to fully protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants.

Chapter Four is dedicated to addressing the first two research questions. The chapter begins with a profile description of my interview participants. It then describes the participants' views toward process writing pedagogy. It also illustrates their challenges with this pedagogy as well as their challenges with responding to teacher commentary.

Chapter Five reports the findings for the last two research questions. It presents the participants' perceptions toward their composition courses and the skills they have and have not learned from them. The chapter also discusses some constraints that might have some negative impacts on learning and teaching.

Chapter Six provides a brief summary of the study and the overall findings. It ends with the limitations of the study, some implications of the study as well as some possible directions for future research.

Summary

The number of international students studying in Canada has been increasing rapidly since 2004. Many of these students are ESL learners. It is known that a good command of written English is essential for university study, but many of the ESL students find writing challenging and difficult. To better support ESL learners' academic needs in writing, we need to conduct on-going research studies that attempt to capture diverse needs of this student population and to document their challenges and struggles in their own terms. Although many studies have been conducted in the field of ESL writing, not many have focused on students voicing their own learning experiences. The present study is conducted not only to fill the gap, but also to find some answers to the problems I have been confronted in my own teaching context. To develop a fuller picture of these students' learning experiences, I also look into the culture of the research site in order to uncover the institutional influence on their learning. Findings of the study may help ESL specialists develop a better understanding of the complexity of academic writing acquisition as well as uncover gaps between what teachers teach in class and what students actually need. Through the research journey, I also believe that I can gain some meaningful insights that help me grow professionally. The purpose of the next chapter is to present an overview of the relevant literature on ESL writing as well as the relevant studies done on feedback and revision.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Academic Writing in Higher Education

The ability to communicate one's ideas effectively in print is considered to be a crucial skill that an individual must possess for success in the twenty-first century (Hyland, 2003a; Kellog & Whiteford, 2009). In higher education, writing is often the main channel where professors assess students' intellectual understanding of course work. Tertiary students need to develop adequate levels of academic writing (Elander, Harrington, Norton, Robinson, & Reddy, 2006) as good written communication is crucial to their academic success (Burke, 2008; Giridharan & Robson, 2011; Hutchings, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2003; Zhu, 2004). Synthesizing various survey study results, Kellogg and Whiteford (2009) report that students are underprepared for writing at the post-secondary setting and a substantial number of faculty members do not think that students have adequate writing skills to handle college writing. Giridharan and Robson (2011) further remark that "Although, many ESL students at university have a general understanding of grammar rules, not many are able to write academically at levels expected of them" (p. 1).

In reality, university writing can be very challenging to any students, native English-speaking students as well as L2 students (Fox 1994; Lee & Tajino, 2008; Salamonson, Koch, Waver, Everett, & Jackson, 2011; Zhong, 2007). L2 writers often face more challenges than L1 writers (Canagarajah, 1999, 2002; Ridley, 2004).

Canagarajah (1999) states that "To be academically literate in English, second language students have to acquire not only linguistic skills, but also the preferred values, discourse conventions and knowledge content of the academy" (p. 147). Despite the obvious linguistic and syntactic constraints, L2 students may also face the challenge of not being taught explicitly about the written codes and conventions of writing (East, 2006; Elton, 2010; Hutchings 2006; Silva, 1993). Since ESL students usually do not grow up speaking English and they are often not very familiar with western culture, not being taught about these particular written codes and conventions can add another layer of difficulty for these students to develop their academic writing competency. Some writing scholars and researchers have argued that L2 students may not use proper citations in their writing not because they lack academic integrity and ethics, but partially due to the fact that they have not been taught explicitly about the dominant academic conventions (Bloch 2001; East, 2006; Pennycook, 1996; Shi, 2004).

In reality, to compose in L2 is not an easy task (Bell, 1995; Fox, 1994; Leki, 2007; Shen, 1989; Steinman, 2003). Shen (1989), a well-published Chinese scholar in North America, has often found that composing in English also requires him to align his thinking with North American ideologies. According to Shen (1989), an individual's original insight, whether based on empirical evidence or not, is not usually valued in Chinese writing. During his schooling in China, Shen felt that voicing one's views in Chinese writing at that time could be perceived as "being disrespectful of the Communist Party and boastful in scholarly writings" (Shen, 1989, p. 94) and this act could possibly even put one in political jeopardy. However, to produce good English writing, Shen

(1989) often felt compelled to reprogram his mind and to forgo his Chinese beliefs so that he would be more capable of voicing his opinions, supported by primary or secondary sources, with ease. For him, such an adjustment process is unpleasant and he has often found it " … rather painful to hand in such 'pompous' (I mean immodest) papers to my instructors" (p. 95). While Shen (1989) felt that he had to reprogram his own thinking when writing English prose, Canagarajah (2002), although he also learned to produce acceptable English pose, often felt that he had to stand up for his own rights. When he began his graduate studies in the United States, he used his Tamil writing style to produce English writing. His written texts were often criticized for being full of contradictions and redundancies because they lacked the expected topic sentences and thesis statements. Instead of passively accepting the comments, he fought hard and showed his professors how his writing was as logical as the expected English style. Although some of his professors eventually could see his train of thoughts in his Tamil writing style, he was still expected to demonstrate the writing format that is commonly found in English academic writing.

Bell, a Canadian literacy educator, also went through a similar experience but in a different context. Recalling her experience in learning to write in Chinese, Bell (1995) depicted numerous conflicts she faced between English and Chinese literacy practices. For example, the strategy of analyzing and understanding how each word can be broken down into a small unit enabled her to learn English words. She found that this analytic approach hindered her attempt to acquire Chinese characters. Instead, she needed to repeatedly practice each character in order to acquire it, a skill not highly valued in the

Western world. These scholars' experiences confirm that to be able write in L2 requires one to learn more than just the linguistic features of the language. L2 writers also need to know and learn L2 rhetorical knowledge and culture-specific knowledge.

Situating writing in the social constructionist view, Johns (1990) remarks that "the language, focus, and form of a text stem from the community for which it is written" (p. 27). The community that Johns referred to is the discourse community and Swales (1990) has defined it as a group of people who share the same goals, have its preferred communication mode to communicate, have a highly specialized terminology and have a threshold set for people who wish to join. Being accepted into the academic discourse community can be problematic for novice writers as well as ESL students (Johns, 1990) because these students may lack the essential writing schemata of preferred communication modes and have limited access to this essential information. In fact, some scholars have indicated that university writing can be challenging for any newcomers because each discipline has its preferred style of writing (Lea & Street, 1998; Hyland, 2007).

Process Writing Pedagogy and its Potential Shortcomings

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, the writing paradigm experienced a major shift from product-oriented pedagogy to process-oriented pedagogy (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Matsuda, 2003a; Peleg, 2011). In the product-oriented approach, the student writer is often instructed to read a wide range of literary works and asked to analyze these works in his/her writing. In a typical writing classroom of this type, the writer is often guided to become familiar with and to imitate the conventional rhetorical structure from the model

composition. In addition, the core of this writing instruction is to guide students to produce error-free and mechanical correctness texts (Li, 2012; Peleg, 2011). Tracing the history of second language writing instruction, Matsuda (2003b) has commented that through exposure to modelled written texts and imitating modelled sentence patterns via abundant combining and substitution exercises, the student writer is believed to be able to develop his/her writing competence and produce an error-free text. Since the student writer is instructed to closely follow the modelled writing under this model, writing instructors often do not pay much attention to guide students to attend to the composing process (Matsuda, 2003b; Li, 2012; Peleg, 2001). Li (2012) remarks, "Quantity and products overrode the composing process and effectiveness. Such activities as discussions, feedback, conferences, and revision were absent" (p. 67).

Unlike product-oriented pedagogy, process-oriented writing instruction, as its name suggested, has focused more on the process in which the writer usually engages to discover and to express ideas in print (Ferris & Hedgcook, 2005; Johns, 1990). Rather than emphasizing grammatical knowledge and textual features (Badger & White, 2000; Matsuda, 2003a), this approach to writing pays particular attention to the composing process that the writer usually goes through to solve writing problems as well as to revise emergent texts (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2003a). Two major camps often associated with this particular paradigm are expressivists and cognitivists (Faigley, 1986).

While expressivists emphasize free writing with minimal instructional intervention in order to develop writing proficiency (Elbow, 1981), cognitivists view writing as a problem solving activity; high-order thinking skills and problem solving

strategies are two essential components in the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Scholars and researchers who share the same view as the school of cognitivists began to investigate and compare how competent writers and novice writers approached writing. They also tried to pinpoint the skill sets that competent writers normally displayed so that these skills could be taught explicitly in class to help novice writers (Akinwamide, 2012). In fact, a cognitive approach to writing is believed to have a significant impact on the construction of L2 writing theories and classroom practices (Atkinson, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Johns, 1990) as Johns (1990) has noted,

> [i]n most classrooms, ESL teachers prepare students to write through invention and other prewriting activities ..., encourage several drafts of a paper, require paper revision at the macro levels, generally though group work ..., and delay the student fixation with and correction of sentence-level errors until the final editing stage. (p. 26)

In addition to engaging the student writer in preparing multiple drafts of a paper, proponents of this writing paradigm also believe that there is a need for intervention during the writing process before the student writer finalizes his/her written work. In class, instructors adopting such a teaching approach often provide various types of feedback between drafts to further assist the writer in reformulating his/her ideas and refining his/her written work (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Matsuda, 2003a). Feedback from peers may also be utilized by writing instructors to help student writers refine their written work (Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam, 2011; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Ferris, 2003; Hu, 2005; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Yang, Badger & Zhang, 2006).

As would be the case with any writing model, process writing pedagogy has also undergone some scrutiny since the 1990s (Canagarajah, 1993; Hyland, 2003b; Matsuda, 2003a; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Santos, 1992; Silva, 1997). Among the scholarly articles, some common critiques associated with process writing pedagogy can be summarized as follows. First of all, this pedagogy has the tendency to ignore contextual factors, such as cultural and educational factors, that may come into play when one produces a text (Casanave, 2003; Hyland 2003b). Process writing pedagogy often requires students to follow a prescribed way (e.g., focusing on content development) to develop their writing skills, but in some cultures, ESL writers may be accustomed to attending to both content and form issues at any stage of their L1 writing (Bell, 1995) in order to produce a good piece of writing. This approach to writing may have the tendency to devalue the diverse learning styles that ESL students bring with them.

This writing approach is also criticized for lacking explicit instruction on western rhetoric (Feez, 2002; Hyland, 2003b) because under this model, it is perceived that the student writer can learn to produce good texts through self discovery in his/her writing process and the utilization of writing strategies to eliminate writing problems. In reality, knowing how to produce a summary in one's native language does not mean that the student can make a proper summary in English (Kern, 2000). Without explicit instruction on western rhetoric, L2 writers face numerous challenges with English writing, "particularly those who bring with them a set of conventions that are at odds with those of the academic world they are entering" (Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1993, p. 30). Since L2 writers may often lack knowledge of western rhetoric and writing conventions, this

pedagogy seems to force them to draw on the discourse conventions of their own cultures, thereby failing to produce texts that are considered adequate in most western universities. Hyland (2003b) states that

> Students outside the mainstream, therefore, find themselves in an invisible curriculum, denied access to the sources of understanding they need to succeed. Thrown back on their own resources, they are forced to draw on the discourse conventions of their own cultures and may fail to produce texts that are either contextually adequate or educationally valued. (p. 20)

The third criticism stems from a mismatch between the composition class and reality, in which, as Horowitz (1986) put it: "…multiple drafts and revisions, and peer-group evaluation create a classroom situation that bears little resemblance to the situations in which [writing] skills will eventually be exercised" (as cited in Santos, 1992, p. 166). For instance, in the university setting, while L2 students may be guided to produce multiple drafts of an assignment in their composition classes, their discipline courses often assess their work based on a single version and their final examinations are also often based on one-draft writing. In addition to the mismatch between the writing class and reality, Atkinson (2003) notes that the process writing paradigm represents text production as an asocial activity and he states, "Process writing, its strongest guiding force over the last part of the 20th century, was resolutely asocial in any theoretical sense, although not especially structuralist" (p. 4).

In response to these common critiques, other alternative pedagogy models have emerged to address the shortcomings of process writing while retaining its benefits, such as Badger and White's (2000) process genre approach and Hyland's (2007) genre approach. Both models recognize that writing is a context bound activity and each

writing genre is specific to a particular group of people who prefer and communicate in a specific way (Hyland, 2007). Guiding L2 writers to analyzing the target text and explicitly teaching them the preferred communication modes and the texts in their own discipline, the writing instructor empowers L2 writers through providing access to the patterns in the valued texts (Hyland, 2007), which is often neglected in process pedagogy (Feez, 2002; Hyland, 2003b). A group of scholars have also published journal articles exchanging their views toward the future development trend of L2 writing instruction in the post process era (Atkinson, 2003; Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2003b; Matsuda, 2003a). For example, sharing his view of writing in the post process era, Atkinson (2003) perceives that future writing instruction and writing research must take into consideration social and political factors while retaining the advantages of process writing instruction, thus expanding and broadening our understanding of the complexity of L2 writing.

To sum up, process writing pedagogy has had a tremendous influence on how writing instructors should approach teaching writing since the mid 1970s. Although this process-oriented approach has been under serious attack since 1990 and many other new writing approaches have also emerged, such as the genre approach to teaching writing, the process writing paradigm is still influential in writing instruction and teaching (Barnhisel, Stoddard, & Gorman, 2012; Hartshorn, 2008; Zeng, 2005). In fact, in my teaching context, process writing pedagogy is adopted in the ESL programs as well as in the first year-writing composition courses for ESL students.

Revision

In the context of multiple-draft writing, revision is integrated in one's writing process. Student writers are often guided to engage in constantly reformulating their ideas so that they can convey their thoughts clearly in print. They also need to re-evaluate what they have written in order to eliminate any grammatical or lexical weaknesses. It is known that student writers, especially weaker ones, might not be able to detect any dissonance in their written products on their own. Teacher feedback then plays a crucial role to guide students to make revision changes in order to improve their texts.

In the next sections, I review some of the major issues and research findings related to revision and feedback that are relevant to my study. As L2 writing theories and research interests often mirror the theory development and research path of L1 (Canagarajah, 2002; Grabe, 2003; Matsuda, 2003a; Santos, 1992; Silva, 1993), I first delineate some relevant literature in L1 followed by studies in L2.

Diverse Definitions of Revision

In L1 studies, prior to the 1970s, writing instruction was heavily influenced by the behaviourist view toward language learning (Canagarajah, 2002; Silva, 1990). Revision was then perceived as simply an act of correcting grammar or editing at the sentence level (Fitzgerald, 1992; Silveira, 1999; Kietlinska, 2006) and it only took place at the final stage of writing. In fact, this view of revision as a mere editorial action taking place only at the final stage of writing had prevailed for many centuries (Fitzgerald, 1992). Between the 1970s and 1980s, divergent views and descriptions of revision emerged. While Britton, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) view revision as a linear process consisting

of prewriting, writing, and postwriting. Murray (1978) uses the terms prevision, vision, and revision. Murray (1978) further divides revision into two stages. Internal revision is defined as "everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say" (Murray, 1978, p. 87), while external revision is defined as "what writers do to communicate what they have found" (p. 91). Murray's work on revision began to change the traditional view of revision as a mere text alteration to a more comprehension view of revision, consisting of macro as well as micro changes (Fitzgerald, 1987). Bishop (2004, as cited in Haar, 2006) depicts the act of revision as "revising in" and "revising out". Revising out would normally focus on developing and expanding one's ideas and this act also "… allows for revising in and as a result often helps a writer produce a better text because all investigations – of ideas, words, sentences, style, shape, and tone - are instructive to the interested writer" (Bishop, 2004, p. 14, as cited in Haar, 2006, p. 11).

While many experts perceive the process of revision as a linear act, Flower and Hayes (1981) hold a different view, emphasizing the recursive quality of revision (Myhill & Jones, 2007). Their main argument is that writing is a series of hierarchical cognitive processes and revision can take place any time during one's composing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Many different definitions of revision have also emerged since the 1980s. Sommers (1980) defines the revision process as "a sequence of changes in a composition - changes which are initiated by cues and occur continually throughout the writing of a work" (p. 380). Fitzgerald (1987), drawing on several other scholarly works on revision, offers a detailed description of what revision should entail.

> Revision means making any changes at any point in the writing process. It involves identifying discrepancies between intended and instantiated text,

deciding what could or should be changed in the text and how to make desired changes and operating, that is, making the desired changes. Changes may or may not affect meaning of the text, and they may be major or minor. Also, changes may be made in the writer's mind before being instantiated in written text, at the time text is first written, and/or after text is first written. (p. 484)

Although scholars may hold divergent views toward revision, all of them seem to agree upon the idea that there are two stages of revision. The first stage refers to the mental process and the second stage refers to the changes actually made (Fitzgerald, 1987). In other words, writers often need to first detect the incongruities in their papers and such incongruities then prompt the writers to take necessary actions to eliminate any dissonance. In addition, while many scholars believe that the act of revision is triggered by detecting potential problems in the text, Hayes (2004) argues that the revision act may not solely be initiated by detecting errors in the text because "in many cases, we revise not because we discover a fault but we discover something better to say or find a better way to say what we have said" (p. 11).

To better understand students' revision behaviours and to better assist students developing their writing competency, L1 researchers began investigating students' views toward revision and comparing and contrasting revision behaviours between competent writers and novice writers (Beach, 1976; Sommers, 1980).

L1 Students' Views toward Revision and Their Revision Patterns

In L1 composition studies, a substantial number of studies have revealed that novice writers tend to revise micro-level aspects of the text (e.g., grammar-related errors), while experienced writers revise more macro-level problems (e.g., content-oriented concerns). Beach (1976) conducted an exploratory study with 26 pre-service English

teachers. The researcher notices that nonrevisers in the study made minor mechanic changes, while extensive revisers tended to make significant changes to their content. Beach (1976) also notes that extensive revisers viewed each revision of the same paper as related and every change as contributing to the overall quality of the final product. In contrast, nonrevisers treated each revision as a separate task and they did not seem to see that each revision they made counted toward the completion of the final written product.

Also interested in gaining insight into what role revision played in one's writing process, Sommers (1980) conducted a longitudinal study among university students. She divided her research participants into two groups based on their experience in writing: experienced writers and student writers. She found that the students from each group used very different words to describe revision and held very different views toward it. The student writer group often used the word 'redo', 'remark', and "scratch out" to describe the act of revision and they all believed that when revising, they needed to work on cleaning up the written text and eliminating redundancy. The experienced writer group often demonstrated an awareness of potential readers and approached each revision cycle with a purpose. She noted that their revision concerns for early drafts would often be more on refining their arguments and expanding their ideas. They would concentrate more on stylistic concerns toward the completion of the written product. Sommers (1980) also found that although experienced writers had the tendency to focus more on making global revision changes in the early drafts, they would also attend to making local revision changes when they spotted such errors in their text.

As mentioned before, L2 investigators have the tendency to follow the path of L1 composition studies. To better understand how L2 students revised, numerous L2 researchers have also begun examining ESL students' revision patterns and other related issues (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Porte, 1997; Silva, 1993; Sze, 2002; Takagaki, 1999, 2003; Zamel, 1983).

L2 Students' Revision Patterns

In L2 revision studies, some writing scholars have indicated that L2 students, in general, display similar revision behaviours to L1 novice writers due to the linguistic and rhetorical constraints when they write in L2 (Hyland, 2003a). Several researchers also note that L2 writers may tend to revise more on surface and linguistic features (Barkaoui, 2007; Porte, 1997; Sze, 2002) partly because they may have difficulty comprehending L2 reading materials or because they may simply equate revision with proofreading exercises (Ferris, 1997; Kietlinska, 2006). Summarizing several research findings, Silva (1997) concludes that student writers tend to review less and reflect less on their L2 written texts compared to writing in L1. He also believes that revising in L2 is usually more difficult because L2 writers do not possess the advantage of revising by "ears"; that it, to make revision changes based on what sounds right or wrong.

Even though there seems to be a general consensus that L2 writers tend to make more sentence-level changes compared to their L1 counterparts (Sze, 2002), other investigators also believe that one's linguistic development and competency in L2 play an important role on how L2 writers approach revision (Hall, 1990; Myles, 2002). Hall (1990) compared four advanced writers' revision behaviours in L1 and L2. He

discovered that these four students generally used very similar revision strategies between both languages. The participants appeared to revise and review their L2 texts more. They also needed to spend more time revising the text in L2, which may imply that "composition in a second language places a far greater burden on revision while managing the complexity of text production" (Hall, 1990, p. 56).

In contrast to Hall's findings, Takagaki (2003) utilized the think-aloud protocol to investigate the revision patterns among three Japanese participants in L1 writing and in L2 writing. These participants possessed various writing experiences in Japanese and in English as well as various levels of English proficiency. The investigator found that the participants tended to make more revisions in L1 than in L2. Takagaki (2003) perceives that the participants were able to make more revisions in L1 because they are more familiar with the language. They were then more capable of identifying the dissonance between what they wanted to express and what they actually conveyed in print.

To further understand how L2 students revise, L2 researchers have also explored L2 students' perspectives and attitudes toward revision and their revision behaviours. Below is a brief review of some of the relevant studies.

L2 Students' Views toward Revision and Factors Affecting Their Revision

In the process writing model, revision plays a crucial role in text production (Fitzgerald, 1987; Haar & Horning, 2006; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986; Sze, 2002). Being able to revise one's writing well is, in fact, a difficult skill to learn and student writers often face numerous difficulties in revision (Myhill & Jones, 2007). Among novice and experienced writers, novice or weaker writers often face more revision

challenges because they are often weak in identifying where the potential problems are (Zainuddin & Moore, 2003) and they may also have insufficient knowledge and tactics available to help them solve the identified problem.

In the west, revision is viewed as a process consisting of rethinking what is written and determining and executing what will need to be done in order to improve the quality of the written text (Changuoy, 2001). Scholars have argued that what effective revision means in western academia might mean something very different among non English speaking students because "they [L2 students] may naturally view revision in solely punitive terms as a means to correct surface mistakes without even trying to develop and refine content" (Kietlinska, 2006, p. 67-68). In other words, L2 writers may not share the view that revision is an opportunity to rethink their ideas, reformulate their thoughts, and take actions to eliminate any dissonance in their text. In fact, not only L2 students but also native English speakers may hold a very simplistic understanding of revision; that is, to revise is to merely clear up the written text (Lehr, 1995; Kielinska, 2006; Sengupa, 2000). Several researchers have conducted interview studies with ESL/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in order to better understand how these students view the concept of revision and to discover what potential factors influence students' revision behaviour (Conrad & Goldstein 1999; Porte, 1997; Lee & Schallert, 2008; Treglia, 2009).

Porte (1997) interviewed 71 EFL undergraduate students to gain a better understanding of their perceived attitudes toward revision; all of the participants were weak in their academic performance. The investigator also examined the effects of

perceived teacher preferences on students' revision choices. In class, their composition instructors normally focused on teaching English grammar and emphasizing the correct use and usage of English. Porte (1997) found that 58 out of 71 participants perceived revision to be important because "it was conducive to the improvement of the final grade awarded to the text" (Porte, 1997, p. 68). The investigator also discovered that there was a direct correlation between what was often emphasized in these students' composition classes and how they would revise. In other words, since the composition instructors often emphasized the importance of accurate usage of English grammar and words in their feedback, the participants also reported that they were inclined to make surface changes in their revision. Porte (1997) also identified that the focus of students' revision was directly linked to how these students perceived their instructor's notion of a good paper. Based on their experience in the class, most students believed that a paper with minimal grammatical errors would be awarded a high mark by their instructor. In short, Porte's study (1997) suggests that students' experiences in their composition courses and their perceived teacher preference of a good paper can influence how students go about revision.

Also interested in gaining insight into students' revision, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) conducted a case study with three ESL students (Tranh, Marigrace, and Zohre) at a large urban American university. They discovered that certain types of text problems seemed to impede the participants' abilities to revise successfully. For instance, these three students generally faced great difficulty when asked to revise texts that contained logic or argument weaknesses. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) suggest that rather than

conveying this type of writing problem through written feedback, it might be more beneficial to students if writing instructors could deal with the above mentioned weaknesses in class or in the face to face conference. By doing so, instructors can discuss and explain in detail how to resolve such revision issues. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) also identified various personal factors affecting their participants' revision decisions in their study. Although all three participants encountered difficulty with content related revisions, each individual's difficulty was caused by a very different reason. Tranh did not revise effectively because he lacked certain research skills to help him gather relevant content information. Even though Marigrace followed and directly addressed her instructor's feedback in her revision, her main weakness lay in her lack of knowledge regarding how to construct a good expository essay. Marigrace did not know that she needed to have a purpose for her claims and was never taught explicitly in class that she needed to develop a purpose. Thus her paper, though thoroughly revised, was still weak. Zohre did not revise successfully due to not having sufficient strategies to address the comments but also spending insufficient time on her written work. As she took 15 credit-hours of course work and had to work 12 hours per week, she did not have much time left for her school work.

Treglia (2009) also found that individual circumstances and personal factors played an influential role on her participant's revision decisions. The researcher conducted a semester long study with two first-year composition classes. Both classes consisted of native English speakers as well as non-native English speakers. Treglia (2009) noted that two ESL students (Bart and Ana) from the same class often did not

revise their papers. The researcher later discovered that their responsibilities toward their family disallowed them from spending much time on their course assignments. As Bart and Ana in the study were the breadwinners in their family, they needed to work in order to support their family, thereby spending very little time managing their course work. In addition to family responsibilities, Treglia (2009) also believes that lacking adequate academic skills and English proficiency could affect one's revision actions because Ana's weak academic skills greatly limited her capability to effectively revise her subsequent written work.

While weak control of academic and language skills may impede students' efforts in revision, some researchers envisage that the relationship between the teacher and the student also plays an influential role in how the student revises (Dong, 1996; Lee & Schallert, 2008; Myles, 2002), which has often been overlooked in research (Anson, 2000; Fife & O'Neil, 2001). For instance, Lee and Schallert (2008) found that students' perception of their instructor seemed to play a crucial role in students' decision to revise or not. These investigators conducted a case study with two Korean students to investigate if the role of teacher-student relationship had any impact on students' revision actions. In the study, one participant received his entire English training in South Korea, whereas the other student received most of his English training in the United States prior to returning to South Korea for his university study. The investigators found that the student who received his English training in the United States constantly challenged the English competency of his writing instructor. He spent very limited time in revising his papers because he did not think the instructor could benefit him much in his writing

development. The Korean-trained student who often displayed a high respect for his instructor always devoted time to deciphering his instructor's written comments and revising his papers substantially because he believed that his writing instructor could help him develop his writing competency. Lee and Schallert (2008) conclude that there is a causal relationship between the attitudes of students toward their writing instructor and their decision to revise.

Other scholars and researchers believe that to make feedback effective and useful, students have to act on it (Glover & Brown, 2006.) The case study of Sze (2002) illustrates two conditions that may need to be in place in order to make teacher comments useful for students. One is that feedback receivers have sufficient knowledge and skills to address the feedback and the other is that feedback receivers need to act upon the feedback. Sze (2002) conducted her study with one weak ESL grade 11 student to examine how the student approached revision. Two separate writing assignments were given. For each writing assignment, the student was required to write the first draft and then revise the draft on his own. The researcher would then read the revised one and make comments. The student would then revise the draft in response to the comments. Sze (2002) found that this student generally did not perceive a need to revise his written text and he seldom revised unless he was required to. Sze (2002) also found that the student often made more revision changes when guided by the written comments than when revising on his own. He was quite capable of making more structure and content related revision changes based on the written feedback than on his own. The researcher noted that the student was not able to revise most of his grammatical errors when revising

on his own. The student also admitted that he had very limited knowledge of English grammar. Although he might be able to detect grammatical problems, he would tend to write a brand new sentence instead of correcting the existing grammatical errors. Once the researcher provided the student with brief instructions on how to revise some of his grammatical errors, the student was found to be much more capable of tackling such weaknesses in his subsequent revision.

Sze (2002) also found that the student involved in the study was often not required to revise his texts for his courses. So, he often did not see the need to pay much attention to the written feedback. Such a finding was also found in the study of Glover (2004). Glover (2004) conducted a three-year research project which involved science students and the staff at two universities in UK in order to seek for potential changes in feedback practices. Glover (2004) discovered that one particular condition that made teacher feedback ineffective was that feedback was provided too late and many of the students had already moved on to a different task for their courses. As a consequence, many of these students did not find it useful or see any need to attend to the feedback. These studies imply that the efficacy of written feedback can be compromised if feedback recipients are not required to act on it.

The review of aforementioned revision studies in L2 suggest that one's linguistic proficiency and one perception of revision play a role on how one approaches revision. While revision seems to be at the heart of producing a well written text in the west, ESL students may not share this view. These students may tend to revise more surface aspects of their text due to their weak control of L2 linguistic and rhetorical knowledge. Students

also do not revise in a vacuum. My review of the relevant literature also revealed that contextual and individual factors affect how one goes about revision, which should not be overlooked (Anson, 2000; Fife & O'Neil, 2001; Goldstein, 2001). While lacking time or lacking sufficient knowledge to revise and feeling distrustful of the teacher's competency have been identified as potential factors to dissuade students to revise, Goldstein (2004) has argued for the need to continue to identify potential factors that influence how L2 students approach revision, especially when the L2 population is a very diversified student population (Peleg, 2011). In addition, little is also known regarding how these factors can influence L2 students' motivation to revise (Goldstein , 2006). More qualitative case studies that look at different groups of L2 students at their own context and that identify these potential factors can help develop a better understanding of how students revise based on teacher commentary (Goldstein 2004; 2006). Therefore, to better understand how my participants go about revision, I also intend to identify factors that affect my participants' revision decisions.

As writing scholars and researchers have also looked into feedback practices in order to develop a comprehensive view of students' revision actions, I now discuss some issues related to feedback research and review some relevant feedback studies.

Feedback

The importance of feedback has emerged in composition studies since the writing paradigm shifted from the product approach to the process approach (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In general, feedback plays a significant role in the development of student learning (Carless, 2006; Hatti & Timperley 2007; Hyland & Hyland 2006; Miao, Badger,

&Yu, 2006; Weaver 2006) as it informs the student what he/she has mastered and what he/she has yet to accomplish in his/her learning process. Teacher commentary, along with other sources of commentary (e.g. peer feedback), usually serves as a pedagogical intervention to scaffold the writing development of the student and to show the dissonance between what the student writer intends to convey and what is actually conveyed in print (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Under Vygostsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) framework, teacher comments and dialogues with the student writer (e.g. conversations in teacher-student conferences) during the writing process enable him/her to develop his/her writing competency. Such interventions are believed to be most effective when provided within the learner's ZPD and should be removed gradually once the learner shows signs of mastery (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). For instance, an ESL writer with very limited grammatical knowledge may benefit from teacher feedback that simply indicates the location of the grammatical error. Instead, he/she may need the instructor to supply the right answer on the error in order to conceptualize his/her grammatical errors. It is believed that once his/her grammatical knowledge increases and he/she is familiar with his/her errors, simply pointing out the error may be sufficient for the person to correct the error on his/her own.

Overall, although feedback is one of the central components of process writing instruction, no unanimous and consistent findings on its positive impacts on the student's writing development can be drawn yet (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Due to the instructor's authority role, some studies have provided evidence that students in general place more

faith in teacher feedback than they do in other forms of feedback (Connor & Asenage, 1994; Miao, Banger, & Zhen, 2006; Tusi & Ng, 2002; Zhang, 1995).

Issues with Teacher Feedback

Starting in the 1980s, some scholars began criticizing teachers' approaches to feedback on student's work (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Zamel 1985). Zamel's (1985) often-cited study, "Responding to student writing", examined 15 ESL teachers' feedback practices on ESL students' written texts, Zamel (1985) found that

> ESL writing teachers misread student texts, were inconsistent in their reactions, made arbitrary corrections, wrote contradictory comments, provided vague prescriptions, imposed abstract rules and standards, responded to texts as fixed and final products, and rarely made content-specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text. (p. 86)

Zamel (1985) also argues that ESL writing teachers seemed to act more like language instructors than writing instructors. As such, they tended to focus on making comments at the micro-level of the text (e.g., grammar). However, the written text of the student writer might have contained a more serious problem at the macro-level of the text (Zamel, 1985), which deserved more attention in order to scaffold the writing development of the student. In addition to the concerns that Zamel (1985) raised, some L1 and L2 scholars have begun looking into another issue; that is, teacher feedback sometimes has the potential to appropriate student's ideas (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1982; Hyland, 2000).

Potential Danger of Text Appropriation

Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) first brought up the notion of text appropriation in L1 feedback studies. According to Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), text appropriation

occurs when instructors make comments without fully knowing the actual intentions of students. In other words, when the writing teacher reads the student's paper, he/she also interprets what the writer intends to express in print. Without communicating with the student, the instructor may misinterpret the intention and include feedback that distorts the student's original ideas. Also, due to the hierarchal nature of the teacher-student relationship, many students may be inclined not to question teacher commentary and may simply accept the comments. One negative consequence of such an incident is that student writers might feel that "what they wanted to say is less relevant than the teacher's impression of what they should have said" (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982, p. 158). Hyland (2000) warns that "teacher interventions [written feedback] may lead to students relinquishing control of their writing and revision processes, as well as their written products" (p. 33) when the feedback provider and the feedback recipient do not keep a two-way communication about the written text. Holding a different view, Reid (1994) argues that guiding L2 writers to learn the expectations of academic discourse should trump any fear of appropriating students' work. Since L2 learners usually lack schematic knowledge of English writing expectations and conventions, composition instructors need to "accept their responsibility as cultural informants and facilitators for creating the social discourse community in the ESL writing classroom" (Reid, 1994, p. 275).

Other feedback issues that L2 researchers have looked into include the effects of various feedback types on L2 students (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Kaweera, 2007; Sachs & Polio 2007; Treglia, 2009), the efficacy of error correction on students' writing development (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003;

Ferris, 1999, 2004, 2006; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007), and student reactions to teacher

feedback (Brice, 1995; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999;

Enginlarlar, 1993; Fazio, 2001; Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Robert, 2001; Hedgcock &

Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2008).

Effects of Different Types of Feedback

Researchers who have investigated the effects of different types of feedback often

try to pinpoint which particular type of written commentary enables L2 students to

produce better written texts. They have examined written comments from several

perspectives (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999), such as their value (positive feedback vs.

negative feedback), function (comments asking for information, imperative comments),

forms (direct comments, vs. indirect comments, vs. hedged comments) and the length of

comments (long comments vs. short comments).

Attempting to pinpoint the particular type of feedback approach that would best

help ESL students to improve the quality of their writing, Fathman and Whalley (1990)

conducted a quantitative study with 72 ESL college students. These students were

divided into four groups and each group received different feedback. The four

approaches were: no feedback, merely grammatical feedback, merely content feedback,

and grammar and content feedback simultaneously. Grammar feedback focused on

pointing out the errors but the correct answers were not provided. The content feedback

consisted of the general comments on the writing. All the participants were asked to

write a story based on eight pictures. The researchers found that all of the students

improved the quality of their papers regardless of which types of feedback were supplied.

Students who received no feedback also tended to write longer essays when revising their papers. Contrary to the common belief that teacher feedback plays a crucial role in student writing, such a finding seemed to suggest that students could improve their paper just by rewriting alone, and the instructor's intervention may not always be necessary (Fathman & Whalley, 1990). Secondly, the investigators did not discover any significant differences regarding the quality of content between the group receiving only content feedback and the group receiving content and grammar feedback simultaneously. This finding may also suggest that student writers were able to process different types of feedback at the same time. Thirdly, the researchers also note that positive feedback (e.g., giving encouragement) helped improve student writing, which to some degree contradicts the findings of Ferris (1997).

Ferris (1997) examined over 1500 written comments provided on 47 ESL students' essays to determine the effects of different types of written comments on students' revision. The investigator developed her own rating scale that categorized the impact of revisions into three groups: improved texts, mixed impacts, and negative impacts. Unlike the study of Fathman and Walley (1990), Ferris (1997) found that very few revision changes were made based on positive comments. When these students did act on positive comments, the quality of the written text improved. Among the participants, the investigator found that students made effective changes when comments requested them to add more information, to respond to imperative comments, and to correct grammatical and mechanical weaknesses. Student writers seemed to make ineffective changes when comments indicated that the student writer might have

misunderstood the source writing or when comments were phrased as question forms. Ferris (1997) also found that all of the students in the study appeared be able to revise well when processing content and form feedback simultaneously.

Conducting his study in an EFL context, Ashwell (2000) divided 50 EFL university-level Japanese students into four different feedback groups (content feedback and then form feedback; form feedback and then content feedback, content and form feedback simultaneously; no feedback). The researcher reported that 1) the three groups with feedback generally improved their accuracy in the final drafts compared to the group without any feedback, and 2) all groups improved the content regardless of whether they obtained feedback or not. Similar to the finding derived from Ferris' study (1997) and Fathman and Walley's (1990) study, Ashwell (2000) also noted that the participants receiving a mix of content and form feedback simultaneously improved their text accuracy as well as their content the most.

While the aforementioned researchers are interested in exploring when to provide content feedback and form feedback, another group of researchers have focused their attention on the potential effects of different types of feedback construction on students' revision. Hyland and Hyland (2001) utilized a case study approach to examine the impact of three feedback functions (praise, criticism, and suggestions) on students' revision. In their study, the researchers only examined end comments because these comments tended to be longer compared to the in-text comments which were often shorter. In addition, most of the in-text comments were symbols or codes that indicated linguistic errors, which did not fit the criteria that the investigators intended to examine. Hyland and

Hyland (2001) found that some students might not be able to grasp the instructor's intended meaning and might even misinterpret the feedback when the negative feedback was softened too much. For instance, two writing instructors involved in the study were confronted with some students directly lifting texts from external reading sources. Instead of personally discussing the issue with the students or directly pointing out the problem, one of the instructors wrote "Where did you get this information? Have you used quotations?" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 201). The researchers noted that one particular student writer did not understand and capture the instructor's intended meaning. He did not know that his instructor wanted him to use quotations. Instead, the student thought it was just a suggestion and it was up to him to decide what he wanted to do. At the end, the student still left the suspected plagiarized text unrevised. The study of Hyland and Hyland (2001) suggests that although teacher feedback has its potential to guide students in their learning process, the pedagogical benefit of feedback can be seriously compromised when the feedback receiver does not fully understand it.

In the study of Treglia (2009), she also attempted to find out which type of feedback her participants had trouble with in revision. The investigator conducted a study with community college students from two first-year writing courses (a mix of L1 and L2 students in each class). She also looked into the issue of whether or not students had difficulty understanding mitigated feedback. Mitigation feedback is often utilized to avoid hurting the feeling of the feedback recipient by toning down the harshness of the criticism. Instead of telling the student "This is not clear, reword it", an example of a mitigated comment would be "I get a sense of what you want to say, yet the language

could be made clearer." The investigator found that the participants in the study were able to revise equally well no matter how the commentary was phrased. Unlike the students in the study of Hyland and Hyland (2001), none of the students in Tregla's (2009) study had trouble understanding mitigated feedback.

Like Ferris (1997) and Conrad and Goldstein (1999), Treglia (2009) also found that all of the students seemed to face difficulty when responding to feedback that required them to utilize analytical abilities, such as re-evaluating the logic of one's paper and providing more explanation to clarify one's idea. Treglia's (2009) study provided support to Conrad and Goldstein's claim (1999) that certain types of text problems (texts that contain logic and argument weaknesses) seemed to cause students difficulty in revision, rather than certain types of feedback. Treglia (2009) recommends that in order to help students address teacher comments more effectively, teachers should teach strategies and provide examples of how to address comments with which students have most difficulty, which is one of the pedagogical recommendations echoed by some prior researchers (Ferris, 1999; Kietlinska, 2006; Porte, 1997; Sengupta, 2000).

To sum up, in process writing instruction, content feedback followed by form feedback is a commonly recommended feedback procedure (Ashwell, 2000) in order to avoid L2 students feeling cognitively overloaded during the writing task. The studies by Fathman and Whalley (1990), Ferris (1997), and Ashwell (2000) have shed new light on when to provide content feedback and grammar feedback. As the findings of these studies reveal that L2 students seem to be capable of managing various types of feedback simultaneously, instructors may need to be flexible in providing feedback that best meets

the needs of each individual student. Such flexibility is even more important when working with L2 students because they often face linguistic challenges in writing and want feedback on their written errors. Ferris (2003) has advised writing instructors to view "such issues [when to provide content or form feedback] … as a continuum, and rigid and somewhat arbitrary prescriptions about the types of comments teacher should give to their students at various stages of the writing process may well be inappropriate and unhelpful" (p. 23).

Although no general consensus regarding which type of written feedback is the most effective to facilitate students' writing development has been reached (Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), empirical evidence available has shown that teacher feedback should be constructed according to the need of each individual student (Conrad and Goldstein 1999, Ferris, 1997; Treglia, 2009). There are some questions that require future researchers to explore in order to determine the impact of teacher feedback on student writers. As mentioned earlier, Treglia (2009) found that her participants were capable of making sense of mitigated feedback and utilizing it effectively in their revision; however, other researchers found that students had difficulty grasping the real intend conveyed in the mitigated feedback. It will be helpful if future researchers can look into how exactly or in what condition students are able to make sense of mitigated feedback because "this is an aspect of feedback which needs to be investigated more directly" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 206). Also, although L2 students seem to welcome both praise and criticism from their instructors, what is the optimal ratio between praise

and criticism feedback so that feedback receivers do not doubt the sincerity of praise feedback?

Debates on Error Correction

Another area of feedback research in the L2 context centres on whether error correction benefits the L2 writer and whether it helps him/her improve the accuracy of his/her writing. It is understandable that such an area has attracted so much attention and discussion because limited knowledge of L2 language can serious impede students to produce L2 text successfully (Myles, 2002). More than a decade ago, Truscott (1996) published a controversial paper against error correction feedback, initiating a heated debate among scholars on the efficacy of corrective feedback in the student's writing development. Although Truscott (1996, 1999, 2007) recognizes and acknowledges the value of error correction, he values fluency over accuracy in L2 writing and is strongly against instructors providing error correction feedback because it has the potential risk to de-motivate students' learning desires. After reviewing a numerous empirical error correction studies, Truscott (1996) also argues that error corrective feedback does not really improve the grammatical accuracy of the student's writing nor does it help the student become a better writer in the long run, which he confirmed again in his recent study in an EFL learning context.

Sheppard (1992) conducted a study to examine the effectives of different feedback treatments. He divided 26 ESL college students into two groups. One group of students had all of their surface errors pointed out and students in this group also had a face to face conference with the instructor to discuss each grammatical error. The other

group of students only received comments that required them to provide more clarification. In the face to face conference, the instructor would only discuss with this group of students about the comments made on their papers. Sheppard (1992) found that despite different feedback treatments, both groups of students seemed to improve their writing accuracy when the investigator compared their use of verb forms, punctuations, and subordinators before and after the feedback. The group that received error corrections had the tendency to avoid using subordinators in their writing partially because students experienced more difficulty utilizing subordinators accurately. The researcher also found that this group made less improvement on the use of punctuation. Sheppard (1992) concludes that students who were guided to pay more attention to make their meaning clear would also attend to their surface errors and would write better than the students who were asked to focus only on correcting surface errors.

In another study, Truscott and Hsu (2008) conducted a quantitative research study with 47 EFL graduate students in Taiwan to explore if receiving error correction feedback benefited students in the development of their writing proficiency. All of the participants were required to revise their drafts after receiving the feedback. The participants were divided into two groups: one group receiving its errors underlined and the other not receiving any error correction. A week after the revision, all of the students wrote a new essay. Three pieces of written work from each participant were analyzed and examined to determine if there were any significant differences between the control and treatment groups. The researchers found that even though the group receiving error correction feedback was able to correct more grammatical errors in the subsequent draft, they did

not seem to carry over that ability to a new essay. The researchers found that students in the treatment group did not make fewer errors in the new task than those in the control group. Truscott and Hsu (2008) conclude that the improvement students made in their revision did not help them become better writers in a new task.

Disagreeing with Truscott's extreme stance against error correction in his article published in 1996, Ferris (1999) detailed the flaws of Truscott's claims. Her main arguments include that 1) studies used by Truscott are inadequate and inconsistent, and 2) error correction does lead to short-term improvement in students' writing (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). All of the participants in the aforementioned studies improved the quality of the subsequent draft after receiving error correction feedback. Since L2 writers not only learn to write but also learn the language at the same time (Hyland, 2003), the very fact that L2 writers want and need feedback on their errors (Ferris, 2003; Hedgcook & Lefkowitz, 1994; Hong, 2004; Myles, 2002; Saito, 1994) certainly should not be overlooked. Leki (1991) points out the danger of not providing error correction to L2 students by stating that "Ignoring their request for error correction works against their motivation.... It seems at best counter-productive, at worst, high-handed and disrespectful of our students, to simply insist that they trust our preferences" (p. 210). Other scholars worry that refusing to provide students with such feedback would de-motivate them (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1999; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Lee, 2005).

Although one of Truscott's key arguments is that corrective feedback does not help students improve writing in the long run, Ferris (2002) perceives that "long-term

improvement is unlikely without observable short-term improvement" (p. 8). So far, no definite conclusions have been drawn between Truscott and Ferris' error correction debates. Nevertheless, their debates certainly have aroused considerable interest among researchers to further examine the issue and to accumulate empirical evidence, such as whether or not error correction feedback contributes to the improvement of students' writing (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) and how explicit the error correction feedback should be to become effective (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen 2007).

Researchers who have examined types of error correction feedback are also interested in learning how explicit the error correction should be to be effective. Several studies have been conducted to examine the effects of different degrees of explicitness in teacher feedback on student writing (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener; Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hong, 2004; Sheen, 2007). In direct error correction feedback, writing teachers often provide accurate and detailed correction of students' errors. In indirect error correction feedback (coded feedback), instructors simply underline errors or provide correction codes (e.g., CS indicates a comma splice error) to the errors that students make. Students need to figure out how to fix the errors themselves. For instance, Ferris and Roberts (2001) divided 72 ESL writers into three feedback groups: a group receiving coded error corrective feedback on their errors, a group having their error underlined, and a group without any feedback. They found that the two groups of students who had their errors indicated performed better in editing their texts than the group that received no feedback. Students seemed to perform

equally well in editing their texts when they received coded feedback or when their errors were just underlined.

Hong (2004) also adopted a similar design like the one utilized in Ferris and Roberts' (2001). The investigator conducted a study with 103 ESL students enrolled in the ESL program at Brigham Young University. Students were divided into three different feedback treatment groups: the coded feedback group, the non-coded feedback group, and the no feedback group. In the study, the students were first asked to write an in-class essay. Two weeks later, they obtained their essays back with or without feedback depending on which group they were assigned to. The students were then given 20 minutes in class to correct their grammatical errors. The researcher found that students who received feedback were able to correct more errors than students who did not receive any feedback on their errors. Like Ferris and Roberts (2001), Hong (2004) did not find any significant performance differences between the students who received coded feedback and non-coded feedback.

Although the aforementioned studies indicate that students who received error correction feedback were able to better correct their errors, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) note that L2 students with low L2 proficiency may not be able to correct the errors themselves even if these errors are marked for them. While implicit error correction feedback has its potential to foster students' self-correction abilities, such a feedback approach may not work well for all types of errors (Ferris, 2003). Ferris (2002) categorized errors into two types: treatable and untreatable errors. A treatable error is defined as an error "related to a linguistic structure that occurs in a rule-governed way"

(Ferris, 2002, p. 23), whereas an untreatable error, such as a word choice error "is idiosyncratic, and the student will need to utilize acquired knowledge of the language to self-correct it" (Ferris, 2002, p. 23). Recognizing the different types of errors, Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005), recruited 53 post-intermediate ESL students in New Zealand to compare three types of feedback on the accuracy of students' use of three types of grammatical errors (prepositions, past tense, and the definite article). They found that students were able to avoid rule-governed errors, such as the past tense and the definite article, but not prepositions. They also made a similar recommendation to Ferris' on the treatment of errors (2003); teachers should be flexible and selective in providing feedback for different types of errors.

The review of several studies conducted on error correction feedback has revealed that no overall consensus regarding the efficacy of error correction among researchers can yet be reached, especially for providing a definite answer for the question; that is, whether or not error correction enables students to be a better writer in a long run . This is one of the weaknesses in the existing error correction research (Ferris, 2003) and more longitudinal research that strives to determine the impact of error correction feedback on the writing development of students is warranted. Nevertheless, most of these studies have shown that students are able to improve the quality of their writing and/or they are able to correct more grammatical errors when they receive error correction. There seems to be a consensus that L2 students may not be best served if teachers refrain from providing error correction. Another question that remains to be answered in the area of error correction is that whether or not error correction feedback really helps students

improve their ability to correct all types of grammar errors? Researchers who have

looked into this issue have focused their attention only on a limited number of

grammatical features, such as the use of English articles and past tense. More studies that

look into other types of grammatical features may help convince teachers the efficacy of

corrective feedback. While more has to be done to determine the exact impact of error

correction feedback on student revision and their writing development , Ferris (2003)

reminds teachers that

> we must, in the meantime, rely on the research evidence that does exist, our own
> experience and intuitions, and the desires of our students to inform and guide, but
> at the same time remind humble and avoid rigidity, knowing that as research and
> teaching community, we are still shaping the knowledge and discourse of our
> discipline. (p. 58-59)

Contribution of the Present Study

From the literature review, I have first illustrated that revision and feedback are

two important components of process writing pedagogy. It is known that many studies

have been undertaken to examine L2 writing issues. Although much research has been

done on student learning, not many studies have focused on portraying students' own

perspectives on their own learning (Leki, 2001; Poulos and Mahoney 2008). By

interviewing my participants on their perceptions of their instructors' written comments

and allowing them to voice their concerns, this study makes a positive contribution by

narrowing this existing gap.

Numerous empirical studies have emerged to examine revision issues; however,

several researchers have noted that much of the existing revision research has not paid

sufficient attention to the contextual factors as well as the relationship between teachers

and students (Anson, 2000; Fife & O'Neill, 2001; Goldstein, 2001; Lee & Schallert, 2008). Goldstein (2004) emphasizes the importance of taking consideration of contextual factors by stating that

> To best understand factors that affect teacher commentary and how students use teacher commentary in revision we need to begin with context. This context is a unique combination of factors stemming from the institution and the program within which the writing, commenting, and revision takes place, and factors that teachers and students bring to the process, as well. (p. 65)

Recognizing this potential gap, I invited my participants to describe their composition courses, included questions to explore their relationship with their instructors and looked into potential institutional factors. The findings of my study can add to the existing knowledge base of contextual factors that influence teacher feedback and student response.

The findings of the study also make a direct contribution to the development of more comprehensive understanding of L2 writers since it is a huge diversified population. Each study focusing on different learners with different linguistic backgrounds (e.g., L2 international students, L2 immigrants, or Generation 1.5) can help inform L2 practitioners how to interact with this diversified population and may help L2 instructors build a repertoire of teaching strategies. Finally, Hyland and Hyland (2006) claim that even instructors themselves feel that "they are not making use of its [feedback's] full potential", and "Many questions relating to feedback remain unanswered or only partially addressed" (p. 83). My study, which focuses on students' experience of revision and feedback, can help address this gap and provide some pedagogical insights to help L2 instructors improve their feedback practices.

Summary

I have begun this chapter with a brief introduction of the complexity of academic writing in the postsecondary context. In general, not only native English-speaking students but also non-native English speaking students have found university writing quite challenging. I have then illustrated some of the major critiques of process writing pedagogy. Process writing pedagogy may have the tendency to ignore L2 student writers' prior learning experiences. L2 student writers might not be given specific instruction on what was expected in writing. A potential disparity might also exist between what was being emphasized under this pedagogy and what the students were actually required to produce in reality. I have also provided a review of relevant revision and feedback studies, two major elements of process writing pedagogy. Although many studies in these fields have taken place, more qualitative case studies that focus on contextual factors as well as on learners' own perspectives are much needed in order to develop a fuller understanding of L2 students. I have ended the chapter with a brief discussion of the potential contribution of my research. The next chapter provides information on research methods, research participants, data collection and data analysis, and related ethical issues.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this chapter, I provide information about my research questions. I then describe the characteristics of qualitative research and of case studies and my rationale for selecting such a research approach to address the research questions. I also include a discussion of my own role in the study since the researcher's role and prior experiences have an impact on research findings (Merriam, 2009). The logistics of my data collection are then presented. This includes a discussion of where the research took place, how I recruited my research participants (both interview participants and survey participants), and what types of data sources were gathered. In the data analysis section, I discuss how I managed my multiple sources of data and how I constructed categories in order to address my research questions. This chapter ends with a discussion of some ethical issues relevant to the study.

Research Questions

My study is established to describe how ESL undergraduates feel about their ESL composition classes in a Canadian post-secondary context. Specifically, what are their perspectives on their own experiences in a process-oriented writing classroom? In addition to describing their experiences, I also investigate the challenges they faced when revising their papers based upon teacher commentary as well as their general academic challenges in tertiary education. Below are the four main questions that I attempt to answer.

1   What experiences did students have in relation to process writing pedagogy?

2   What challenges did ESL students encounter when responding to teacher

    commentary?

3   Did the writing courses help students manage their writing assignments for

    other university courses? What skills did students feel that they must have but

    have not learned from the writing courses?

4   How did the institution alleviate or reinforce the challenges that ESL students

    experience in the acquisition of academic writing?

In this study, I chose to employ a qualitative oriented research design with a case

study approach to best address the aforementioned questions.

Research Design

Qualitative Research

Guba and Lincoln (1994) have noted that "Paradigm issues are crucial; no

inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about

just what paradigm informs and guides his or her research" (p. 116). In other words, it is

prerequisite for an investigator to determine which research paradigm would better guide

him/her to study the phenomenon before he/she embarks on a study. As each particular

research paradigm represents very distinctive ontological, epistemological, and

methodological assumptions, the underlying assumptions of the chosen paradigm often

guide a researcher to take particular actions and make particular choices of research

methods.

I believe that gaining insight into the learning experiences of ESL undergraduates via their own lens has its educational value to better guide writing instructors when we make pedagogical decisions. Lee (2008) also reminds instructors the importance of paying attention to students' learning from the learners' perspectives as she remarks that without any knowledge of how students view teacher commentaries and what their challenges are can seriously demolish the effectiveness of teacher commentary on students learning. Thus, I adopted a qualitative research orientation to gather and analyze the data because my goal was to develop an in-depth understanding of the investigated topic. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a qualitative oriented research design often allows the investigator to accomplish such a goal. They further indicate that although quantitative and qualitative investigators may both be interested in uncovering the individual's perspective, quantitative researchers might not be able to capture the research participant's personal view due to "rely[ing] on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 9). Because learning participant's personal view was crucial for the study, qualitative research is best for "representing the views and perspectives of people...in a study" (Yin, 2011, p.7).

Ontologically, in a qualitative researcher's view, the world "is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research" (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). A qualitative researcher believes in the existence of multiple realities which are time-dependent and context-dependent. It is perceived that no individuals experience exactly the same reality because "[i]ndividuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences - meanings directed toward certain

objects or things" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). A qualitative investigator is often interested in learning the meanings that each individual ascribes to his/her experience, instead of meanings gained from literature or the researcher's own experience (Creswell, 2007). To develop a full understanding of a unique reality, a qualitative inquirer often immerses himself/herself in the research because "knowledge emerges from achieving a deep understanding of the data" (Joniak, 2002, p. 6). Unlike a quantitative researcher beginning his/her inquiry with a certain set of fixed hypothesis and measuring criteria, a qualitative researcher often begins his/her inquiries with a tentative set of guiding questions and is flexible to make necessary modifications as the research process unfolds. A detailed and rich description of the findings, often containing quotes made by research participants, rather than numbers or statistics is a typical feature of qualitative report writing (Creswell, 2007; Merriam 2009).

In this study, I utilized two strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of my study. First, I strove to provide detailed information regarding how I derived my findings and based on what evidence. Second, I also incorporated the practice of reflexivity by detailing my different roles associated with the study. In the present study, I possess three different roles: an ESL learner, a per course writing instructor, and a university administrator. Primeau (2003) has asserted that "[r]eflexivity enhances the quality of research through its ability to extend our understanding of how our positions and interest as researchers affect all stages of research process" (p. 9). Jootun and McGhee (2009) also deem reflexivity to be one of the crucial elements for a good qualitative study. Being clear about what exactly I did in the report and being honest about my different roles

associated with this study may provide potential readers with a better means to judge my findings, for "a key part of qualitative research is how we account for ourselves, how we reveal that world of secrets" (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 29).

The Case Study Approach

Within a qualitative paradigm, there exists a variety of research strategies (e.g., biography, phenomenology, case study, etc.) for researchers to utilize in order to best address their investigated issue. A case study approach was employed in this study to investigate ESL undergraduates' experience with process writing because I am interested in developing a better understanding of a real and contemporary phenomenon. A case study approach would also allow me to attend to contextual factors to have a fuller understanding of the learning experience of my ESL writers. According to Flyvbjerg (2011), in the study of human affairs, concrete, context dependent knowledge is more valuable than the search of predictive theories because "human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts..." (p. 303). Thus, the case study approach is best suited to produce such concrete, context dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Silva also recommends that "a researcher's questions would determine the design" (p. 4) when one is pondering which research method should be chosen. When deciding which research method I should utilize, I also let the nature of my research questions guide me to select a case study approach. As mentioned before, I am interested in learning how my ESL participants feel about process writing pedagogy and what challenges they face in academic writing as well as when responding to teacher

commentary and revising. It is known that a case study approach is often utilized to answer "how" and "what" questions (Yin, 2009), and thus selecting this research method is quite appropriate.

Merriam (2009) has defined case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). If a case has no clear boundary, a case-study approach is not suitable. For instance, a study of how students experience English writing can be a qualitative study but not a case study because an indefinite number of participants can be selected for the study. To be a case study, a clear boundary has to be defined, such as a particular writing program (a bounded system) at a particular university. Merriam (2009) also notes that it is the unit of analysis that defines a case study. In the present study, the case is defined as a group of ESL undergraduate students at Memorial University. The unit of analysis is their experiences with process writing pedagogy.

Brice (1998) claims that "the case study is particularly helpful for studying affective aspects of the learning process because of its flexibility, allowing researchers to adjust or refocus boundaries as they gather data and gain a better understanding of the issues that are relevant to the phenomena under study" (p. 71). I found that flexibility has been particularly important due to the fact that I had no control over how things would unfold, such as who would be selected to be my participants, whether or not I would be able to observe writing classes, and how each participant responded to his/her writing assignments. Being flexible allowed me to come up with contingent plans when my original plan was not working. When reviewing the relevant literature, I noted that the classroom context and the relationship between teachers and students could play a certain

role in how students respond to teacher commentary. I had planned to visit all of the writing classes in which my participants were enrolled. Prior to conducting my study, a casual chat with a couple of colleagues had led me to conclude that it would not be an issue if I observed their classes. Unexpectedly, several of my classroom visits were rejected in my second round of data collection. To respond to such an unexpected incident, I added in some interview questions to solicit my student participants' retrospective accounts of their writing class context.

In short, a qualitative research design with the case study inquiry is appropriate for the nature of research questions that I intended to answer. It is also appropriate because its main strengthen is to allow the investigator to study the investigated phenomenon in its own specific context in depth and to take contextual factors into consideration, which is deemed essential in feedback and revision studies (Goldstein, 2001).

The Incorporation of a Critical Stance

In this study, I applied a critical lens to answer my last research question: how the institution alleviated or reinforced the challenges that ESL students experienced in the acquisition of academic writing. I chose to incorporate such a stance in the study partially because "…educational systems are reflections of the societal systems within which they operate, and since in all social systems we have discrimination and marginalization… , the same biases are reproduced in educational systems" (Akbari, 2008, p. 276). Applying a critical lens may help uncover subtleties that may have been taken for granted but are there to advantage, intentionally or unintentionally, a certain group of people. In reality,

numerous writers and researchers, some adopting a critical theory perspective, have demonstrated that certain dominant methods of teaching and/or certain dominant view toward knowledge construction could devalue students with different cultural or class backgrounds and disadvantage them in their academic achievement (Heath, 1982; Pennycook, 1996; Shi, 2004). In a classic study, Heath (1982) uncovered a disparity in the types of communication codes students from different ethnic and class backgrounds used at home and the type of communication code that was valued and expected at school. She noted that although the function of school was to disseminate knowledge and skills, "much of this transmission depends on [communication style]" (Heath, 1982, p. 147). Her study has illustrated the fact that inequity existed in educational institutions as certain students are taught in the way they are very familiar with, while others may have to conform or learn new ways in order to succeed (Noblit, 2005).

In scholarly literature, many critique articles and research have emerged regarding the inadequacy of adopting a moralistic view toward plagiarism among ESL students who do not grow up in the western culture (Abasi, Akbari, & Graves, 2006; Casanave, 2004; Chandrasoma, Thompson, Pennycook, 2004; Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Shi, 2004). While the notion of plagiarism is often associated with theft in the west, such a view has been found not to be shared universally because the notion of authorship varies in different cultures (Bloch 2001; Canagarajah, 2002; Hu, 2001; Shi, 2004). Hu (2001) states that "In many Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and First Nation cultures, ... knowledge is believed to belong to society as a whole, rather than an individual..." (p. 54). Therefore, ESL students who share such communal view of knowledge pose no threat to any individual's

right when using pre-existing statements without references or borrowing words. Some studies have also revealed that L2 students did not utilize proper references not because they wanted to cheat but because they were never given proper guidance on how to cite (Shi, 2004; East, 2006). Since plagiarism is a very complex notion and the notion of plagiarism "needs to be understood within the particular cultural and historical context of its development" (Pennycook, 1996, p. 217), adopting a moralistic and simplistic view toward any cases of improper textual borrowing among ESL students without fully understanding its complexity has its potential to deride other cultures (Chanock, 2008; Park 2003; Price, 2002; Sutherland-Smith, 2005).

Casanave (2003) has also remarked that "English language education in particular is fraught with political mine-fields, given that English is a dominant international language associated with economic and political power, subjugation of minorities, injustice, and globalization" (p. 197). Scholars around the world who may have already been well published writers of their expertise in their native language feel compelled to publish in English in order to gain international recognition. The written texts that students produce can be perceived as political documents, for they are produced in power-infused settings (Casanave, 2003). Especially in process writing pedagogy, teachers often hold the authority to comment on students' work and students usually need to revise according to the expectation of teachers or the evaluation criteria set by teachers or institutions. Holding a similar view point, Goldstein (2004) has advocated that future researchers take into account and explore the potential influence of institutions on teacher feedback practices. She states that " Programmatic and institutional attitudes towards

writing, towards writing teachers, and towards different multilingual populations can greatly affect how teachers provide written commentary and how students react to such commentary and use it in their revisions" (p. 65).

As post-secondary institutions across Canada are actively recruiting international students for their campuses, we ought to examine critically whether campuses are ready to meet the academic needs of these students? I examined the institution in which my ESL participants are enrolled to see whether it has sufficient resources in place to support these students' writing needs in the most equitable way possible. To answer this last research question, I problematized some of the challenges that students encountered in order to discover any systematic issues within the institution. I also analyzed my interview data with two writing instructors and paid special attention to the resource issues that they mentioned.

My Different Roles in the Study

As I am an L2 learner and writing instructor, I will inevitably bring my own beliefs and experience into the study, which might potentially influence me in examining and interpreting the data. Merriam (2009) has emphasized the importance of making one's perspective, biases or assumptions regarding the investigated topic clear to readers. Thus, readers can have something to work with to better understand how one derives one's findings, which can help increase the credibility of the study.

Being an ESL learner myself, I recognize that my own ESL learning experience and views toward ESL writing and English learning in general could potentially influence how I viewed and interpreted my data. I learned most of my English when I was in

Taiwan where Mandarin is the official language and English is not commonly spoken on the street. When I was in university in Taiwan, I perceived that I could only learn good English from native speakers as many of the English courses taught by Taiwanese instructors were conducted in Mandarin. Paradoxically, as an ESL instructor myself now, I believe I am as professional as my native English-speaking colleagues and ESL students can learn good English from me. I work hard to ensure my course delivery is done professionally. In my teaching, I have confronted some pedagogical issues, which I need answers for. To maintain professionalism, I need to develop a better understanding of students' actual experience with process writing so that I have something to work with to make effective modifications to address the teaching issues.

As an ESL writing instructor, I was ambivalent about the usefulness of process writing pedagogy, partially because I did not know much about the pedagogy itself and partially because I was not trained in how to effectively utilize a process approach in class. In fact, I received little training in teaching, let alone in teaching writing. Matsuda (2003) has also noted that it was not until recently that courses on how to teach L2 writing were created and offered in some ESL professional programs. Most of my teaching approaches were based on my own learning experience or made up along the way. What I knew about process writing was to engage students in multiple-drafts of writing and to provide feedback between drafts. I did not know much about providing feedback. While I believe it is important to revise L2 papers to improve the quality, I was skeptical about the practicality of process writing instruction to help students improve their writing. For example, I have noticed that some students would simply retype and

resubmit the same paper after I had spent time making comments. It has been a very frustrating and discouraging experience when I see none of my efforts being acknowledged and noticed. In my perspective, I expect students to spend at least a certain amount of time revising their papers, like I have spent on theirs.

It is also important to mention my administrative role as an international student coordinator in the research site. There were several participants for whom I had provided academic and administrative related guidance. These participants were enrolled in the Bachelor of Technology Program. Although I might not have seen them often since they arrived in Canada, I would often be the person whom they had to contact regarding their questions ranging from course selections to graduation procedure. Because I had provided assistance to them to help solve their problems, I suspected that some of them might in fact return the favour by participating in the study, instead of being interested in the study. Nevertheless, all the interview participants voluntarily shared their views toward process writing as well as the first-year writing curriculum. They also provided detailed information regarding their challenges with teacher commentaries and their revision. Having delineated my different roles in the study, I now describe when, where, and how I conducted my study.

Research Site

I conducted the study at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) from May 2011 to December 2011. There were roughly 1,800 international students on campus. Chinese students are the dominant group in the ESL programs offered at MUN and in the first-year writing courses offered for international students; more than 90% of the

students enrolled in these programs were from China. In reality, China has been one of the dominant source countries of international students in several English-speaking countries (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Douglass & Edelstein, 2009).

Background Information on Three First-Year Composition Courses

English 102F, 1020, and 1021 are three first year writing courses that are offered to ESL students. When hired, instructors are informed that process writing pedagogy is adopted in these courses. All of my participants reported in the interview that they had to submit 3 drafts of each essay, which also confirmed that process writing pedagogy was indeed adopted in these writing courses. Below is a description of each of these three courses taken from the university website of the Department of English Language and Literature (http://www.mun.ca/english/undergrad/newcourseoff.php).

English 102F - Foundation English

Course description: It is a non-credit course designed for students whose language is other than English and whose knowledge and use of English do not meet the standards for entry into regular first-year English courses.

English 1020 - Writing for Second Language Students I.

Course description: This course offers an introduction to the use of English with emphasis on composition for non-native English speaking students.

English 1021 - Writing for Second Language students II.

Course description: This course develops skills in critical reading and writing of academic English, with emphasis on research and writing syntheses from sources, for non-native English-speaking students.

All of the undergraduate students at MUN are required to take at least one mandatory English course toward their degree program. All ESL students who are officially admitted into MUN's degree program are required to take an English placement test prior to taking their first English course. Based on the placement, students will enter either Eng 102F or Eng 1020. This university also offers its own ESL training programs for students who have not met the entrance English requirement and who plan to study in the degree programs at MUN. Every three months, students enrolled in these ESL programs take a Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) test. Once students reach the benchmark (an overall score of 50 or above), they then can matriculate to the university and be placed in Eng 102F. Students who obtain an overall score of 60 or above will be placed in English 1020, which is a prerequisite for Eng 1021. While most academic disciplines require students to take two English courses, students from some disciplines, such as Engineering, only need to take one English course for their entire undergraduate program.

For these three courses, some textbooks are recommended by the ESL director to the instructors; however, course instructors often have the freedom to decide whether to use a textbook and which textbook will be used. To my knowledge and also in my own experience, course instructors would often list the recommended textbook in the syllabus

but gather their own course reading materials on which students' writing will be based.

In general, the main focus of Eng 102F is on refining and strengthening ESL students'

competency in English grammatical knowledge while students also engage in composing

typical 5-paragraph essays. Students in English 1020 and English 1021 often practice

summary writing, synthesis writing, and research paper writing. Lists of academic words

are often supplemented in Eng 1020 and Eng 1021 in an attempt to boost students'

vocabulary competence.

Research Participants

In the present study, I used purposeful sampling in selecting my participants.

According to Patton (2002),

> the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases
> for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a
> great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the
> term purposeful sampling. (p. 230)

Since I was interested in ESL students' experience with process writing

pedagogy, it was crucial that my participants had such an experience in order to voice

their concerns and perspectives on the investigated topic. I only invited students whose

first language is not English and who were enrolled in one of the aforementioned

composition courses to be my interview participants. To be my survey participants,

students could either enrol in one of the English courses or had taken the courses. My

study consisted of three main types of participants: interview student participants,

interview teacher participants, and survey participants.

Interview Student Participants

The criteria for selecting interview participants were 1) being international undergraduate students at MUN; 2) participants' first language not being English; (3) taking English 102F, 1020 or English 1021. I advertised my study via the following two routes: I visited the first year composition courses, and I sent an email containing information about my study to all the international students who were registered on the international email listserve. A total of 14 interview participants were recruited. Twelve of my interview participants were recruited from my classroom visits and two were recruited through the email route.

There were two rounds of recruitment: one in May, 2011and one in September 2011. In May, 2011, I visited composition courses for the recruitment purpose: two sections of English 1020 and two sections of English 1021. Five students were recruited shortly after my class visit. As I worked full time in my university administration role until September 2010, I decided not to recruit any more participants for that semester in order to properly manage the workload. There was one session offered for English 102F, but I did not visit the class for recruiting interview participants since I had secured five participants.

In September, 2011, I began the second round of recruitment and nine student participants were recruited. Although I strived to provide information about my study to all of the ESL composition classes in this semester, I was not able to gain access to four classes out of the nine classes offered in that semester. Among these four classes, I was not successful in obtaining the instructors' permission to visit for two classes and in the

other two, the class sessions were added toward the end of September. By then, I had already secured enough student participants.

My original plan was to recruit eight students for in-depth interviews as Merriam (2009) suggests that a group of eight to twelve participants in a case study seems to be ideal so that researchers can properly and professionally manage the workload. During the second round of recruitment, more students approached me and expressed their interest in being participants in the study. Considering the workload of transcribing the interviews and data analysis, I decided to include the first seven students who contacted me and to invite the rest of the potential participants to participate in the survey. I later decided to include two more students because they held very different academic profiles compared to the other twelve participants. These two students also did not know about process writing pedagogy prior to taking their first-year composition course. Since the instructors at the ESL program in this university also adopted process writing pedagogy, my other 12 interview participants were enrolled in the ESL program and had some experience with this writing approach prior to matriculating to university.

Participants were grouped into the following three categories: Bachelor of Technology Program (B Tech), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), and others. When recruiting the potential participants, I never intended to focus particular attention on recruiting students from either B. Tech or BBA. I was also not surprised to see such a pattern because these two majors were often the representative group of the students in these composition courses. In addition, I was not surprised to see that most of my participants were Chinese as Chinese students were indeed the dominant group in these

classes. The fact that I am Chinese myself might have played a role to attract Chinese students.

Survey Participants

There were also two rounds of recruitment for potential survey participants: one from May to August and the other from September to December. My survey participants were recruited via the following three channels: First, a copy of my survey questionnaire was sent to all international students who were on MUN's international student list-serve. Second, I emailed a copy of the survey to an international program officer at the Faculty of Business Administration so that it could be sent to the students on her email distribution list. Third, with permission of writing course instructors, I visited classes of English 102F, 1020, and 1021 toward the end of the semester to invite students to fill in the survey.

I recruited a total of 103 survey participants: 40 in the first round; 63 in the second round. Almost all of the survey participants were recruited through my visits to their composition classes. I only obtained one survey participant through the email listserve channel during the first round of recruitment and none in the second round of recruitment. Based on my experience in the first round of recruitment, I decided to visit more writing classes in the second round of recruitment in order to find potential survey participants. In this round, I also visited the International Café meeting hosted by the International Student Advising Office to recruit there. Although four students took the survey questionnaires, only one student filled in the survey and returned it to me. Overall, my participants came from various countries: China (80), Columbia (1), Saudi

Arabia (3), India (3), Bangladesh (2), Qatar (2), Belize (2), Russia (1), Jordan (1), Nigeria (1), Japan (1), South Sudan (1), Thailand (1), Brazil (1), Pakistan (1), Azerbaijan (1), and South Korea (1). Two participants from Belize indicated that their first language was Chinese. The 103 survey participants belonged to the following faculties: Business (62), Science (16), Marine Institute (11), Engineering (6), Arts (3), and undeclared majors (5).

Interview Teacher Participants

In the beginning of May, once I had secured interview student participants, I sent emails to two writing instructors whose courses the participants were enrolled in. The instructors were asked if they would allow me to observe their classes and interview them. However, the student participants' identities were never revealed to the course instructors. Only one instructor allowed me to observe the class and agreed to participate in the interview.

In the second round of recruitment, four writing instructors were contacted for the possibility of class observation as well as having an interview with me. Only two instructors agreed to participate; one of them had already participated from the previous semester. I observed the classes of these two interview teacher participants for one entire semester. I also conducted an hour long interview with each one of them. The reason for interviewing these two teachers was to learn their general attitudes toward the writing curriculum, their challenges in teaching the course and their views toward teaching resources available at MUN. This set of data allowed me to address research question 4. Before the actual study took place in May, 2011, I conducted a pilot study in April, 2011.

Pilot Study

In April, 2011, I recruited two international students to fill in the survey I designed in order to identify areas for modification. One major modification was made after I reviewed the feedback provided by these students. In the original survey, one of the survey questions asked students to rank 10 listed skills that they felt they must have to handle writing tasks in university; the exact question is listed below.

Rank the following items (1-10) that you feel you must have to handle writing tasks in university; 10 being the one you definitely need to have

Language skills _____	Task management strategies ___	Rhetorical Skills _____
Research skills _____	Thinking skills _____	Vocabulary _____
Develop idea skills _____	Paraphrasing skills _____	Synthesizing skills ___
Summarizing skills _____		

Others (please be specific and assign a number)

_____

However, both students indicated that they were a little confused with the rating system and not really sure how to assign a number. One survey student indicated that he did not know if he could assign the same number to two items which he felt shared the same degree of importance. In addition, there were too many items for him to choose from. The other survey student wrote, "it would be better if u revise the rating system. From my point of view, the rating system is a little bit rough. You did not specify the level of 1-10, so from my opinion, all I know is 5 stands for medium. However except the 1 and 10, what the exact meanings for other number are hard to evaluate."

I then revised the question by only asking the students to choose 5 items (without assigning any number) that they felt they had to have in order to handle the writing tasks at MUN. Below is the revised version.

Choose 5 items below that you feel you must have in order to handle writing tasks at MUN.

____ Language skills	____ Time management	____Vocabulary	____Research skills
____ Citation skills (e.g., know how to reference outside sources in your writing)	____ Task management skills (e.g., know how to successfully finish a task assigned by your instructor)	____Synthesizing skills (e.g., draw connections among articles you read)	____Paraphrasing skills (being able to restate someone's ideas in your own words)
___ Summarizing skills	____ Rhetorical Skills (e.g., being able to present your arguments effectively with relevant evidence in writing)	____ Being able to present your ideas logically in English writing	____Developing thesis statements and topic sentences for your papers

Data Collection

I was the sole investigator for recruiting participants as well as collecting and

analyzing all the data. I employed a variety of methods for my data collection, including

a survey, audiotaped interviews with fourteen student participants, my notes from writing

class observation, audiotaped interviews with two writing instructors and a collection of

documentary sources. Table 1 illustrates an overview of the timing of my data collection.

Table 1

Data Collection Schedule

April	Pilot Study with 2 students		
First Set of Data		Second Set of Data	
May	5 interview participants identified Emails sent out to recruit survey participants	September	9 interview participants identified Emails sent out to recruit survey participants First student interview proceeded
June	First interview proceeded Classroom observation Second student interview proceeded (at the end of June)	October	Second interview proceeded Classroom observation
July	Third student interview proceeded Classroom observation	November	Third student interview proceeded Classroom observation
The end of July	Survey conducted in 3 writing classes	The end of November	Survey conducted in 5 writing classes
August	Final student interview proceeded Teacher interview proceeded	December	Final student interview proceeded Teacher interview proceeded

I am quite familiar with and confident about the methods I chose because I

conducted similar types of interviews and used similar technologies in my Master's thesis

as well as in one research grant funded by MUN. Further, my intention of collecting data from multiple sources is to gather a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon being investigated and also to "contribute to the worthiness of the data" (Glesne, 1999, p. 31) in an attempt to best represent the participants' emic perspective.

Audiotaped Semi-Structured/Open-Ended Interviews

According to some scholars, the major difference between the research participants in the natural sciences and in the social sciences is that participants in the social sciences are able to think and express their views orally. When given an opportunity to express one's opinion freely, people often have something useful to share on the investigated topic (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Kavle & Brinkmann, 2009). Thus, I chose to conduct interviews with students because I am interested in their learning experience and because I also believe students are capable to tell us about their own learning experience. Rudduck & Flutter (2004) state,

> Pupil commentaries on teaching and learning in school provide a practical agenda for change that can help fine-tune or, more fundamentally, identify and shape improvement strategies. The insight from their world can help use to see things that we do not normally pay attention to but that matter to them. (p. 29)

The technique of interviewing often helps the investigator to gain more detailed information about participants' perspectives. By listening to numerous perspectives on the investigated phenomena, the investigator can reach "more thoughtful and nuanced conclusions" (Rubin & Rubin, 2011, p. 4). To reach the level of rich description, Rubin and Rubin (2005) have recommended that researchers ask main questions, probing questions and follow ups. Main questions are used to start the conversation with the

participant about the investigated issue, while probing questions are used to gain access to more in-depth and detailed information. Follow-up questions are used to help the researcher clarify any confusion or unclear points with the participant.

Four separate interviews with each of 14 interview participants were conducted. The very first interview focused on getting acquainted with each participant while also providing the participant a chance to get to know me. This interview focused on eliciting information regarding their English writing experience, their perception of their composition course, their goals in learning English writing, academic challenges they faced and their plans for the future. As mentioned before, ESL students in the first-year composition courses were requested to write three major essay assignments; each essay assignment contained a total of three drafts. My second, third, and fourth interviews were scheduled after each participant had completed the entire three drafts of one essay assignment and had obtained all the feedback as well as the mark back from the instructor. The primary focus of these retrospective interviews was to explore these participants' responses and reactions to their instructor's written feedback and the challenges they faced during the revision process.

During each interview, I often began our conversation by asking my participants how their study was going since our last meeting and whether there were any particular academic problems that they had encountered that I might be able to help with. I was able to obtain some data about their academic difficulties through this approach. For instance, Participant 5 never mentioned taking on-line courses as one of the challenges when I asked him directly what kinds of challenges he faced in his study. In the second

interview, when I asked him about how his study was going, he began to provide some information regarding difficulties he had with a couple of his on-line courses. In the third interview, I once again asked him how his study was going. He then mentioned that he did not really know how to prepare his papers for his on-line courses and he did not know how to look for help so he decided to drop two of his on-line courses.

I adopted semi-structured open-ended interviews because the main focus of my study had been clearly defined; that is, I wanted to know specifically how students responded to teacher written comments and what challenges they faced during the process. Bryman (2004) has stated that semi-structured interviews work well "if the researcher is beginning the investigation with a fairly clear focus, rather than a very general notion of wanting to do research on a topic…" (p. 315). In addition, two of the interviewing guidelines suggested by Seidman (2006) were followed; that is, 1) listen more, talk less; and 2) follow up on what participants say. I listened attentively, asking for concrete examples when I felt that I did not quite grasp what they had just expressed and keeping post-interview notes on my general impressions. Before each interview section proceeded, I would listen to previous interviews to ensure that I fully understood what my participants said. I would then pose follow-up questions for statements that I did not understand so that my participants could further clarify them for me.

Bogdan and Bilken (1992) state that "[g]ood interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view" (p.97). To make my participants feel at ease, I strove to maintain a fairly relaxing atmosphere, reminding them that I was very interested in what they had to say about each question I asked and that

there were no right or wrong answers for each question. I assured them that everything they said would be kept confidential. I believe that a good rapport was established between each of my participants and me as some stories they shared in the interviews were very personal in nature.

Rationale for Not Using a Think-Aloud Technique

I recognize that in previous studies on feedback and revision, numerous writing researchers adopted the think-aloud technique "as a means of studying the ways in which writers orchestrate what has come to be viewed as underlying cognitive processes" (Witte & Cherry, 1994, p. 20). According to Witte and Cherry (1994), this method involves a participant speaking about what he/she is doing or thinking during a task. A number of researchers also employed think-aloud protocols to examine how ESL students respond to teacher commentary (Brice, 1995; Hyland, 2001). For instance, Brice (1995) utilized a think-aloud protocol to investigate how ESL students actually went about addressing teachers' comments in their revision.

I chose not to adopt a think-aloud protocol for three reasons. First of all, it is not a natural way of writing for participants; secondly, utilizing a think-aloud protocol may potentially exclude some valuable participants. Not every individual can perform a think-aloud protocol even after training, but most can complete a retrospective interview. Thirdly, adopting a think-aloud approach may not yield as much information as a researcher had anticipated. In Mota de Cabrera's (2003) doctoral dissertation on the writing experience of two students, three think-aloud protocol sections were originally planned in order to gather data. The researcher noticed that one of her participants

experienced great difficulty with the method so Mota de Cabrera was only able to include one section of the think-aloud tasks as her data, which to some extent might have limited her findings.

Survey

One of the purposes of using a survey in the study is to collect abundant data by reaching out to as many students as possible so the findings can help me develop a fuller view of students' experience with process writing pedagogy and their overall academic difficulties in writing. The other purpose is to see if survey findings would align with the interview findings. Most of the survey questions were generated by me as I could not locate appropriate samples of survey questionnaires. I did incorporate questions from the survey questionnaire used by Ferris (1995) when she investigated ESL students' reactions to teacher commentary in the multiple-draft composition classrooms. My survey questionnaire contains four major sections: questions about 1) personal background information, 2) perceived challenges in academic writing, 3) views toward process writing pedagogy and how one responded to teacher comments and challenges, and 4) university academic services. These survey questions, including closed as well as open-ended questions, were designed to elicit the students' experiences with process pedagogy, their difficulties, and their assessment of their ESL writing courses. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Participant Observation

According to Harklau (2005), participant observation is the hallmark of ethnographic methodologies and this technique is often utilized in case studies, too (Yin,

2009). With permission of the two writing instructors, I attended some of my interview participants' writing classes to take notes on classroom contexts, such as observing the classroom interactions and recording any particular incidents for further probing during the interviews. Commenting on existing revision and feedback studies, several researchers, L1 as well as L2 alike, have perceived that the description of the context is crucial to the understanding of the research findings and research on teacher response may also need to focus on the roles of the classroom context and the interaction that goes on in the classroom (Ferris, 1997; Fife & O'Neil, 2001; Goldstein, 2001; Lee & Schallert, 2008; Sommers, 2006). Lee and Schallert (2008) have reminded researchers that the classroom interaction and the student-teacher relationship cannot be ignored as they can play a role in a student's decisions regarding revising and responding to teacher comments. I also incorporated participant observation into my research design as one of the data sources to help better understand and explain my interview participants' experiences with process writing pedagogy.

Spradley (1980, as cited in Moss, 1992) has suggested that a research observer enter the field with two purposes in mind. They are "to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation" (Spradley 1992, as cited in Moss, 1992, p. 158). During my class visits, I helped with preparation or instruction if an instructor asked me to but much of the time I sat in the back of the room and jotted down what was covered in class and events that were significant in that particular setting. After each observation, I often wrote a brief memo to reflect on what I observed in my participants' writing classes. These memos to class

observation served as a supplement to help me recap events that were significant in that particular setting and helped identify questions to ask the observed instructors for clarification and/or students for comments.

Other Documentary Sources

Other instruments to gather data included a collection of student written essays from writing courses and other university courses, writing course syllabuses, revision information sheets by interview participants, transcripts of two interview teacher participants, and post interview notes of student interviewees. My intention in collecting writing samples from other university courses was to gain insights on the kinds of writing assignments assigned in university courses other than composition courses. I invited each of my interview participants to keep a revision information sheet documenting how many changes they had made and what kind, and what challenges they had faced during their revision process. A copy of the revision information sheet is included in Appendix E. I created this sheet by myself because from the existing studies I had known of, I was not able to identify one that was suitable for my study. As I am interested in difficulties students encountered with revision, most of the questions in the sheet centre around the revision difficulties students might have encountered when they worked on their drafts. Some participants did a very thorough job in their revision sheets, but some chose not to complete them, or they just recorded very limited information. Since I was not present when my participants revised their essays, this sheet provided me with some information about how they would go about their revision process and it also served as a supplement to help develop questions for interview sections.

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused on the multiple sources of data that I gathered. These consist of the transcribed interview transcripts with 14 interview students as well as two teachers, 103 surveys, my examination of students' essays, and my observation notes. I also reviewed my journal notes to make myself aware of my own assumptions. In qualitative research, some scholars have recommended that the data analysis starts simultaneously with the data collection because such an approach allows the investigator to refine subsequent follow-up questions and redirect attention for the next round of data collection as necessary (Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Merriam (2009) has also remarked that "Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (p. 171). Thus, the analysis of the data in the study commenced as soon as data was collected. As well, I chose an interpretive, inductive approach in my treatment of the qualitative data.

Analysis of Survey Data

The survey consists of closed questions (e.g., questions 4 in Appendix A) and the open questions (e.g., question 11 in Appendix A). When analyzing the responses toward each closed question, I generally tallied and summarized the data. Whenever it was relevant, I also calculated the percentages. My treatment of the survey responses to open-ended questions is very similar to the treatment of my qualitative data derived from the interviews. To examine and analyze the responses to each of the open-ended questions, I applied some principles of grounded theory method. The grounded theory method uses "a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a

phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 24). Instead of beginning the study with a theory, I let the data guide me to develop a theory. The notion of constant comparative analysis was also applied to analyze the data.

For each open-ended survey question, I first created an excel file that contained all of the responses toward each question and then I read the responses. After reading a certain number of survey responses toward a particular question, I generally could begin noticing some reoccurring words or concepts. I often jotted down all these words and concepts in a blank survey questionnaire. Once I finished reading all of the responses on that particular question, I then began grouping similar statements under some reoccurring words or concepts. For instance, in Survey Question 26, participants were asked if engaging in multiple drafts of writing helped them improve their writing skills in English. It is evident that after reading several survey responses, the concept of "learning weaknesses and errors" stood out because it was mentioned frequently although survey participants might use slightly different phrases. Thus, I chose one of the survey participants' exact statements -"It helps me learn my weaknesses and errors" to represent this concept. Table 2 shows all the responses that were grouped into "It helps me learn my weaknesses and errors."

Table 2

Statements Categorized under the Theme of "It helps me learn my weaknesses and errors"

• learn weaknesses and common errors	• I can find different mistakes every time
• learn my weaknesses	• It lets me know the errors and my weaknesses
• We can know our own mistakes	• I can know my errors
• find shortcomings	• It helps you see some easy mistakes that you might not be aware of
• help focus on mistakes	• I realized my mistakes
• find my weakness each time	• I can find my errors
• We can know our own mistakes	• more writing will let me know my weakness
• It helps me find my weakness	• point out my weak areas in writing

I took the same approach to all the open-end survey questions. When analyzing my survey data, I also encountered some difficulty. There were statements left on the survey that I could not really understand or make sense of. In fact, Jackson & Trochim (2002) have stated that one of the drawbacks of utilizing a survey is that "the survey format does not allow the opportunity for immediate follow-up questions to improve understanding" (p. 308). For instance, one of the survey participants wrote, "We can go over the mistakes again and again." Another survey participant responded, "I might repeat some mistakes." The other participant wrote, "interesting class." Examining these comments against the survey question, I was not able to determine what these participants were trying to convey. As all of my survey questionnaires were completed anonymously, it was not possible to locate these participants for further clarification. To avoid

misinterpreting and misrepresenting the data, I decided to disregard survey comments that I could not make sense of in my data analysis.

Analysis of Qualitative Data Derived from Interviews

The qualitative data include 1) interview transcripts with 14 participants, 2) my class observation notes, 3) interview transcripts with two composition instructors, and 4) my post interview notes. I listened to my audio interview files numerous times and I transcribed all of my interview data word for word. As mentioned before, some principles of grounded theory were applied to help make sense of my data. Reading the interview transcripts, I first worked on identifying units of data. According to Merriam (2009), a unit of data can be defined as "a potential answer or part of an answer to the question(s) you have asked in this study" (p. 176). Once I identified the unit, I noted it with a particular symbol as well as making notes. For instance, I assigned the symbol "Q1" to a particular segment of the data because it might contain information that addressed my research question 1. Merriam (2009) called such a process "coding" or some might phrase it as "open-coding". Corbin and Strauss (2008) refer the process of coding as "extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 159), while Ryan and Bernard (2000) view coding as "the heart and soul of whole-text analysis [which] forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text" (p. 780). An example of how I coded my data is presented below. The transcribed conversation took place in my second interview with Participant 10 regarding her first essay assignment. My notes are placed

in parenthesis (). R represents the researcher and P10 represents the interview participant
10.

> R: Do you have any specific problems with the comments?
> P10: If you read my revision sheet and you will see I have some problems.
> Proposition (Q2). And sometimes it is ok for me to say this but it is not ok for
> native speakers and sometimes I can understand it but sometimes it does not make
> sense to me. (Q2 grammar issue)
> R: So you had some problems about the use of propositions? (Q2 Problem with
> proposition)
> P10: yeah.
> R: So did you go and ask your instructor?
> P10: When I have time, I talk to *the writing instructor*. I am kind of busy these
> days so I just took what *the writing instructor* wrote. (Q2 Attitude toward revision
> problem; Limited time affects revision decision)

I applied such a technique to code all the qualitative data. I read each transcript several times. For each of my research questions, I created a file that contained all the data and my notes that I had identified to be relevant to the question. I then re-read and re-examined the data in the file and grouped my notes together based on their similarities in order to construct tentative thematic categories. It is important to point out that the thematic categories generated from the survey data also served as a guide when I constructed the categories from my interview data.

While creating the categories, I followed five guidelines suggested by Merriam (2009). According to Merriam (2009), categories should be responsive to the purpose of the research, sensitive to the research data so that the investigator can place relevant units of data into each category, exhaustive in the sense that the researcher can place relevant units of data into each category, mutually exclusive so that each unit of data can only

belong to one category, and conceptually congruent with a clear boundary between categories and subcategories.

During the phrase of data analysis, I read and carefully re-examined all the transcripts of the interviews and other collected documents in order to confirm the categories that I created among my data were appropriate. When such a confirmation could not be achieved, I would then decide if I needed to create new categories as Liu (2010), citing the work of Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) advises that researchers "must allow new categories to emerge and empty old categories into new ones" (p. 127).

Ethical Considerations

I began my data collection after I obtained the ethics clearance granted by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at MUN. As my study involves the participation of human informants, a code of ethics is followed to maintain the integrity of the study and to protect my participants. All of the participants involved in the study participated voluntarily. In order to secure the full consent of the participants, all of the participants involved were informed of all important details relating to the study prior to their participation. Before the first interview took place with each of the interview participants, all of the interviewees provided their consent by signing the consent forms, copies of which can be found in Appendices B and C. Instead of asking each survey participant to sign a consent form, the survey participants were provided with an information sheet about the study. The survey participants were informed that if they decided to complete the survey, such an act would be considered as

giving consent. If they did not wish to participate, they could simply return a blank survey form. A copy of this sheet is included in Appendix D. In the study, none of the survey participants returned a blank form although some only chose to answer some questions on the survey.

All of the interview participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the process if they wished. None of their names were used in the study to protect their identity and privacy. In addition, any information that would have made it possible to identify participants was not included in the dissertation. The participants were informed that only relevant information that related to the research questions would be included in the report of this research. I also decided not to teach any English composition courses while conducting the research so that I could avoid the possibility of students feeling compelled to participate in the study because of my authority role as their instructor. Prior to partaking in the study, all of the interview participants were also informed about the potential benefits and risks by participating in the study.

Potential benefits. The study has the potential to help university instructors understand the challenges ESL students face in academic writing, especially process writing instruction, and enable them to meet the needs of students better. In addition, student participants were encouraged to keep a revision sheet in order to provide me with some information on how they respond to their teacher's comments and identify questions for the follow up interviews. Students who keep a revision information sheet are normally more aware of the writing challenges they face and the common errors they tend

to make (Ferris, 2003). Therefore, this sheet might have potential benefit for the development of students' English writing.

Possible risks. There were no known or anticipated risks to research participants by participating in this study. The only inconvenience was the time each participant spent for this study. Each interviewee participated in four separate interviews, each of which lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour. As participants were encouraged to keep a revision sheet, they might also have needed to spend some time on this after revising each of their essay assignment. Nevertheless, each revision sheet would take students less than five minutes to complete and might have the benefit mentioned above.

Presentation of the Participants' Statements

To represent my participants' perspectives, I tried to employ their own words whenever possible. Sometimes it was a little challenging to understand some statements due to some grammatical errors in the statements. When such a case occurred, I would include a corrected version with a bracket. Occasionally, my participants' statements might lack some essential information, which could cause some confusion. In such a case, I would add the essential information with a bracket to help readers understand the statement. To protect the privacy and identity of the composition instructor, I used *"the writing instructor"* to replace the use of pronoun when the student interviewee referred to his/her composition instructor. Such a replacement was necessary especially when there were not many male composition instructors in these first-year writing courses.

Summary

In this chapter, I have addressed why I chose a qualitative approach to investigate participants' experiences in process writing pedagogy. I have also provided reasons why I chose to conduct my study at MUN and why I recruited the participants from the three classes (English 102F, 1020, 1021). I have included information on my data collection. I decided to collect my data from multiple sources in order to triangulate my findings. I also incorporated the technique of surveying because I intended to reach out as many participants regarding the investigated topic.

Upon receiving ethics permission from ICEHR, I began recruiting my research participants. The research ethic codes set by MUN have been followed rigorously to ensure that no harms would occur to my participants and their privacy was fully protected. After delineating how my participants were recruited and how the data was collected, I have then illustrated how I went about analyzing the data. I adopted a simultaneous approach of data collection and analysis. I also applied some principles of grounded theory method and followed an interpretive, inductive approach to examine them to generate thematic categories. I have concluded this chapter with the information on how I presented my participants' statements in this dissertation.

In Chapter Four, I first provide a profile description of my interview participants. I then present and discus the findings for the first two research questions. I address the remaining two research questions in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Findings, Discussion, and Pedagogical Insights

I devote Chapter Four and Chapter Five to presenting and discussing the findings of the study. In this chapter, I describe how my participants felt toward process writing instruction, how they thought of revision, and the challenges they faced when responding to their composition instructors' written comments. As my collected data consist of surveyed data and interview data, I report my findings in the following manner. I first present the survey data and then provide a much more detailed individual account on the investigated topic from the interview data.

In general, I found that a majority of the students involved in the study demonstrated a very positive attitude toward process writing pedagogy. These students seemed to value teacher commentary highly and generally perceived that their teacher feedback could guide them to improve learning. Revising and interpreting teacher commentary were found to be quite challenging at least to some students. Analyzing the survey data and the interview data, I identified six main challenges when these students attempted to respond to teacher commentary in their subsequent writing. Before I illustrate my key findings with more details, I provide a profile description of my fourteen interview students.

A Profile Description of the Interview Student Participants

As discussed in Chapter Three, all of the interview participants were grouped based on their academic profiles. Three groups emerged and they were groups of Bachelor of Technology, Bachelor of Business Administration, and Others.

Group 1: Bachelor of Technology

At MUN, The Bachelor of Technology Program is a joint/hybrid program that requires diploma completion at College of The North Atlantic (CNA) in Engineering Technology (three years) plus degree completion at Memorial University (one year: 13 courses in total). There are six students in this category. Except for one student, all of the students in this group are from China.

Participant 1: Participant 1 spent two semesters in the ESL program at MUN before obtaining a full admission into the program. She reported that she liked and enjoyed learning English. She also indicated that she generally enjoyed writing in L1 and L2 as long as she could just write what was in her mind without having to follow any specific requirements. Among all the essay types she had learned, she found summary writing extremely challenging. Maintaining a good academic record was essential and very important to her. Because she planned to do further study after her undergraduate degree, she perceived that a good academic record would secure her admission to graduate studies. She had not given too many thoughts about jobs because her parents wanted her to obtain a Master's degree first.

Participant 2: Participant 2 is a student from Qatar. She held an engineering job in her country. She began to study English when she was 6 years old. After high school,

her parents switched her to a new educational system in which every academic subject was taught in English. She felt that writing in English was easier than writing in her own native language. As the B. Tech program was fully available through distance education, this particular student decided to study just one semester in St. John's to gain some experience of living and studying overseas. She reported that she was overwhelmed by the academic demands and workloads here. She also found that the writing expectation for foreign students in Canada was very high, and the expectation was very different from that in Qatar. She stated, "I felt stressed when asked to write [in Canada]. When I was back home, I did not feel stressed. When I was back home, I considered myself a pretty good writer. And I came here, I felt stressed." Because she held a good job in Qatar, she was not interested in finding a job in Canada. Being able to communicate in English well orally and in writing was very important as she was required to communicate in English at work.

Participant 3: Participant 3 spent five semesters in the ESL program. He held a very negative attitude toward his ESL training largely due to not being able to successfully matriculate to the university fast enough. The student mentioned that he did not enjoy studying at all even when studying in his native language. He often did not perform well in his class in China. He came to Canada simply because his mother wanted him to. Except for his first term in the ESL program, he found all of his ESL training courses boring because he did not find himself learning new knowledge or skills. He claimed, "teachers did not teach us something special, just similar things. Every term is really really similar." According to this student, all he wanted to learn in his ESL

program was the writing techniques so that he could pass the high-stake exit examination, but he did not feel that he learned anything. Although obtaining a high mark would be ideal, all Participant 3 wanted to do was to pass each course and to finish his studying as soon as possible. He planned to go back to China once he completed his undergraduate study. He thought English writing was important because some Chinese companies "think the English skill is important" and these companies would prefer to hire employees who could demonstrate such a skill.

Participant 4: Participant 4 spent one semester in the ESL program before being officially admitted into his academic program. He generally held a positive view toward his English training in Canada. To be able to express well in English was important to this student since English is a global language. As he planned to start a company that managed import and export business between China and Canada, he perceived that it was crucial for him to possess good communication skills in English. In general, the student did not find studying in Canada very challenging and he found himself managing his courses quite well. However, he felt that his still limited vocabulary knowledge sometimes would create a barrier in his study.

Participant 5: Participant 5 spent three semesters in the ESL program. Although he understood my interview questions in English, he answered all the questions in Mandarin. Like Participant 3, this student came to Canada because his parents planned this for him. He felt quite lonely in Canada partly because he did not have many friends. When the interview took place, he only had one in-class course and the others were all distance education courses, which might have limited his chances to meet other students.

The student reported that he would not stress himself over his academic performance as his goal was to keep himself happy. He would return back to China when his study was complete. He did not really know what he was going to do after graduation because he had not given too much thought about it.

Participant 6: The student studied three semesters in the ESL program. He reported that although he passed all of his college courses whose medium of instruction was in English, he realized his English was poor as he could not really understand most of what his ESL English teacher said in Canada. However, he had seen himself improve gradually in the ESL program partly because his ESL teachers were very helpful and patient with him by speaking slowly to ensure that he understood. He perceived that being able to write well in English was essential to him as he had to produce papers in his university study. As he would like to find a job in Canada, he needed to communicate well in English. After gaining some working experiences in Canada, he planned to do further study.

Category 2: Bachelor of Business Administration

There are six Chinese participants in this category. All these participants were in the 2+2 academic programs. These students did their first two year university training back in China and then finished their last two year university training in Canada to obtain an undergraduate degree from MUN.

Participant 7: The student took one 5-week ESL training program and one full-semester ESL training program. Among all the participants, Participant 7 was the student who was most active in seeking opportunities to improve her academic skills as well as

career-related skills. For instance, she partook in the Professional Skills Development Programs (PSDP) for International Students to learn essential knowledge about Canadian job searches. She also participated in academic related workshops to strengthen her academic skills. Participant 7 indicated that obtaining a good mark for each of her courses was one of her goals so that she could maintain her competitiveness when seeking a job. In her writing courses, she would always approach her writing instructors for clarification if the mark she received was not what she had expected. For her, her mark needed to be better each time after revision as she had put in many efforts to revise her papers. She planned to seek employment in Canada after graduation to gain some Canadian working experience; however, she would return home to find a permanent job.

Participant 8: Participant 8 spent one semester in ESL training before being officially admitted into the BBA. Prior to studying in Canada, she indicated that she did not have much writing experience in English. Although her teachers in her home university were helping students prepare for their study in Canada, most of the English writing instruction was on practicing for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, which is one of the recognized English proficiency tests for entering Memorial. She found the ESL training at MUN very helpful in teaching her how to write in English and developing her writing competence. She perceived that being able to write well in English was essential as she was studying in an English speaking environment. For Participants 8, maintaining a good academic standing is important. She also planned to find jobs in Canada after graduation.

Participant 9: Participant 9 also spent one semester in ESL training before taking any credit courses in his academic discipline. He mentioned that he disliked learning English when he was in China because he found his English classes boring. In China, he would often skip his classes and play basketball with his friends instead. Now in Canada, he still did not enjoy learning English; however, he took a pragmatic approach in Canada as he stated, "I live and study in Canada and I think English is very important to me. Even though I do not want to study English, I have to do that." Although writing academic papers was challenging, this student found himself struggling more with comprehending his assigned readings. He often felt that his reading speed was slow so it often took him a long time to finish a reading. He disliked and feared any in-class writing assignments, especially those that required him to read and write concurrently. He would like to gain some Canadian working experience after graduation. However, returning to his country to seek permanent employment was his goal.

Participant 10: Participant 10 took a 5-week ESL training at MUN. Like several other participants, this student also felt that she did not have much experience nor have any training in English writing prior to studying in Canada. She felt that writing in English was like doing homework; she had to do it. When she wrote in Chinese, she often felt that she could express her emotion freely in her written work. In contrast, when she wrote in English, she felt that she had to follow a prescribed format and the writing was more objective without any personal feelings. She had not given too much thought to what she would do after graduation since she had just begun her study.

Participant 11: Participant 11 was the only student in this group obtaining a full admission to MUN without any additional ESL training. She indicated that she did not really enjoy learning English, but her father wanted her to acquire the language. Her father perceived that learning English would make her become more knowledgeable, expand her worldviews, and open up her career options. She considered herself a good student who always tried her best academically. Like many others who planned to seek employment in Canada, she perceived that being competent in English was essential and important to her.

Participant 12: Participant 12 spent two semesters in the ESL program. She felt mastering English was a very challenging task and her biggest weakness was not being able to use English grammar correctly. She indicated that she knew most of the grammatical rules and was able to do well on grammar tests. However, when she spoke or wrote, she had difficulty applying her grammatical knowledge and she tended to make numerous mistakes. To be able to write well in English was very important to her because she stated, "If I cannot write English very well, I will have difficulties in my life here." She considered herself a very good student and strived to maintain a good academic record. She planned to work in Canada at least for a year after her graduation. She also perceived that having strong English competency would definitely make her more marketable in the job market in China.

Category 3: Other Programs

Participant 13: Participant 13 did not spend any time in the ESL program at MUN. Unlike the aforementioned participants who entered the third or fourth year of

their academic programs, Participant 13 just began taking first-year courses without declaring any major. Prior to Canada, he studied in a Chinese university for three years and majored in English. He quit his university program and decided to start all over again in Canada. He perceived that being able to write well in English was very important in the English-speaking society. Like Participant 12, Participant 13 also mentioned that his difficulty with English was not being able to apply grammatical knowledge properly in speaking and writing. He had no intention to look for jobs in China. Instead, he would like to look for a job in Canada and also to immigrate here.

Participant 14: Participant 14 spent one semester in the ESL program. He also began his study at MUN from the first year. He planned to enter the Faculty of Engineering after he completed his first year study. Prior to coming to Canada, he had majored in engineering in a Chinese university for three years. According to the student, he quit his school in China because he spent most of his time in video games, instead of studying. So, his parents decided to send him to study in Canada. He did not find the ESL training challenging because he passed the exit test in his first attempt. However, he found that his current university writing course was very challenging partly because he felt that the writing requirements between the ESL program and the undergraduate program were very different. Oftentimes, he was unsure what his current composition instructor wanted him to produce in the assignments nor what the instructor's expectations were, but he had never felt like this when he was in the ESL program. He planned to look for a job in Canada and to become a landed immigrant.

After introducing each of my interview participants, I now describe how my participants view toward the process writing instruction.

Student Perceptions of Process Writing

In the study, I found all of my participants (surveyed or interviewed) generally possessed a favourable view toward process writing. In their composition courses, they were all required to revise their written texts more than once and most of them felt that such an approach enabled them to express their ideas more clearly and it was essential, especially for composing in L2. Students also felt that they could better eliminate any careless errors through such an approach. In addition, many students felt that revising and editing their drafts enabled them to discover and become aware of their own common writing errors. Some participants even reported that writing multiple drafts enabled them to notice their writing weaknesses so that they could target these weaknesses to make improvement. Students also perceived that working on their own text more than once provided them with numerous opportunities to practice that particular type of the assigned essay so that they could become familiar with its style, its structure as well as the writing conventions associated with that particular type of essay. Compared to one-time writing, a substantial number of students believed that they would produce a better quality of paper through the process writing approach, which could also result in obtaining a better mark. Many students seemed to favour process writing because they believed that practice makes perfect.

However, a small number of students expressed some negative concerns about process writing pedagogy. Some did not find it useful as they did not find themselves

making any significant changes between drafts, just some very minor changes. One consequence of this was that these students found such a process writing approach quite tedious, which did not seem to help enhance their writing competency.

I now illustrate these findings from the survey data followed by much more detailed personal accounts from the interview data.

Survey Data

Survey Questions 12 and 24 were designed to elicit how students felt about process writing pedagogy. While Question 12 was a closed question that listed 6 possible options for survey respondents to choose, Question 24 was an open-ended question that invited students to write down their own answers. Question 12 asked students how they felt about submitting each essay assignment 3 times. Although there were a few negative responses, more positive and favourable responses were identified, which I interpreted as an endorsement of such a writing approach. Table 3 illustrates the responses selected by the survey participants.

Table 3

Student Perception toward Multiple Drafts of Essays

	Number of survey responses	Percentages (%)
Good for improving my writing skills	56	54%
Too much work	17	16%
Waste my time	5	5%
It gives me a chance to learn my weaknesses in writing	70	68%
It is not useful as my other courses only require me to submit one draft of essays	5	5%
It allowed me to learn how to refine my papers	50	49%

Note: Survey participants can choose more than one selection option for this particular question.

More than half of the 103 survey respondents felt that multiple drafts of writing provided them with chances to discover their weaknesses and improve their writing skills and almost half of them felt that process writing also allowed them to refine their work. However, five percent of the survey participants perceived that writing more than one draft of papers was too much work. Since the students' other university courses normally demanded one draft submission, a further five percent of the survey respondents also did feel that engaging in multiple drafts of writing was beneficial or advantageous.

Survey Question 24 asked the participants to elaborate on their opinions on this topic. Here too, more favourable statements were detected than negative ones. Table 4 illustrates these positive comments made by the participants.

Table 4

Positive Comments toward Process Writing Pedagogy

- It provides 3 chances to revise, to find errors and to fix them.
- It helps me learn my weakness and errors
- It helps me see some small mistakes that I might not be aware of
- It helps prevent making the same mistakes
- It helps improve grammar and vocabulary
- I can improve the quality of my essays
- Repetition makes understanding
- It helps me improve step by step
- It may help me well organized and pay more attention to the whole structure
- It helps me develop and strength writing skills during the writing process
  - It helps me write better
  - I can see my improvement clearly
  - First and the second drafts are the most useful as more changes are made

- It helps me learn more skills
- It helps me use more formal English in the papers
- Practice makes prefect
- [Rewriting is essential]: Nobody can write a successful essay without rewriting it
- My first writing does not show my best; I can improve in my second and third drafts
- You can improve grades
- It helps me understand how to revise and improve my revision
- It helps me manage my time well as each stage [draft] focuses different area for improvement
- [There are different focuses in each revision stage, which I know what to focus on]: Second drafts help me fix my organization and third drafts help fix grammar problems
- From the writing process, my writing skills can be developed to the best
  - It helps me in other courses
  - It forces me to figure out a better essay

As mentioned in Chapter Three, although I strove to illustrate the participants' exact words in the table, on two occasions I rephrased the comments in order to best portray what I thought the participants meant. I put my words in brackets [] and present the participants' words next to it. Further, in some cases, survey participants seemed to convey the same ideas, but used slightly different phrases. When encountering such a case during my analysis, I would often select one comment that seemed to best represent what these participants meant. For instance, "Practice makes perfect" was the idea commonly mentioned among the survey participants. However, not all participants used this particular phrase. For instance, one survey participant wrote, "The more you try it, the more you become better." Thus, the latter response was grouped under "Practice makes perfect."

Positive views toward process writing. The surveyed students who held a positive attitude toward process writing perceived that writing multiple drafts enabled them to learn their weaknesses in macro and micro aspects of their papers. It also provided them with ample opportunities to fix their errors, which could result in a better paper and a better mark. Through the process of drafting and revising, some students also felt that they could develop and enhance their writing skills. One respondent reported that because he/she was told what the evaluation focus of each draft was, he/she could better manage his/her time and efforts spent on each draft.

Negative views toward process writing. While more positive responses were derived, it was also important to attend to the negative comments made by the respondents. Since teachers often provide feedback to help students progress, "it is

crucial that student responses to the feedback are fed back to teachers as a heuristic to help them develop reflective and effective feedback practices" (Lee, 2008, p. 145). In other words, paying attention to students' concerns may help instructors identify potential weaknesses for improvement. Table 5 illustrates these negative comments in the words of the survey participants themselves.

Table 5

Negative Comments toward Process Writing Pedagogy

• I do not have time for that	• You just revise following your teacher's comments
• Too much work	• Twice is enough and third time is not necessary
• rigid and little to change	• Little to change; no major differences between drafts.
• It only helps improve the quality of essay, not the writing skills of the students	○ Sometimes there are no serious problems about organization or structure. The problem is only
• Lots of papers just need one draft	some wording and punctuation
• Exam only has one time	issue. We do not need 2 more time of work to fix that.

Similar to the responses to Survey Question 12, a couple of participants felt that writing multiple drafts demanded too much work and was too time consuming. They lacked time to do more than one draft. Four survey participants indicated that writing two drafts of the paper was sufficient for them, but having to write three times was unnecessary and redundant. As one survey participant put it, "I think the main idea of rewrite essays is to help to make the correction. However, more than three times is not necessary because it is kind of wasting time. No good." Another survey respondent wrote, "There was no big difference in quality in my essays. I just needed to improve few

points. That is it." Perhaps because these students did not find themselves making major changes between drafts, they perceived that having multiple chances to revisit what they had written was of little benefit to their paper. Perhaps, these students also did not receive comments that required extensive changes or they received very few comments, so they did not see much improvement in their written texts.

A few surveyed participants also pointed out the academic reality that most undergraduates faced in terms of writing; that is, students could only write one draft in exams or term papers, not multiple drafts. Some also mentioned that their other university courses would only require one draft of paper submission. It was difficult to know exactly the reason why these students made such statements without actually talking to them personally. Perhaps, they might think that it would be better for them to focus on learning how to write a good paper in a one-time setting and under pressure so that they could manage their examinations better.

Although more than 70% of the participants appeared to believe that extensive practices in writing would improve one's writing skills, one survey participant mentioned that just writing multiple drafts was insufficient to improve his/her skills. This participant deemed it essential to also focus on reading as he/she felt that "it needs lots of reading and writing to improve my writing skills." The student was quite right because in higher education, students may no longer engage much in opinion-based writing. Instead, university students are often tasked to write based on some external sources (Leki & Carson, 1997; Wette, 2010). To handle university academic demands, students also need good reading skills (Barkas, 2011; Giridharan & Robson, 2011; Zhu, 2004) in order to aid

their comprehension of the external sources. They then can incorporate what they read with their own views into their writing. Merely focusing on practicing writing may not be sufficient to improve one's overall writing skills if one is having difficulty grasping the reading text. This surveyed participant was also right to feel that engaging in reading was essential because reading texts could serve as resources of "vocabulary, sentence structures, writing styles, organizational patterns, ideas and information" (Leki & Carson 1997, p. 51) to facilitate L2 students in developing their writing competency. Through reading, L2 students could also become more familiar with the English rhetoric.

Although the survey data allowed me to obtain a general impression of students' views toward process writing, the interview data appeared to complement this set of data by providing more rich information and concrete personal examples with regard to how each individual student felt about this writing instruction.

Interview Data

Analyzing the interview transcripts, I obtained even more positive findings than those from the survey data. Thirteen out of 14 interviewed participants held a favourable view toward process writing instruction. In fact, most of what the interview participants described was quite aligned with the survey findings. Except for Participant 3, the rest of the interview participants perceived that such a writing approach could bring a positive impact on the development of their writing competency. Similar to the survey findings, interview students felt that process writing pedagogy enabled them to produce stronger texts through numerous revision opportunities. Some claimed that they had become cognizant of their writing weaknesses, so they could target these areas for improvement.

These students also felt that they would become familiar with various English writing genres through working on each assigned essay more than once. A couple of participants also felt that process writing seemed to waste their time and they had not really learned how to properly structure and organize the assigned essay.

Produce stronger texts through numerous revision opportunities. Most of the interview students perceived that focusing on the process and producing multiple drafts provided them with the opportunities they needed to develop their thoughts further and refine their sentences. There was a general consensus that such opportunities were deemed essential, especially when these students did not compose in their first language. In my interview with Participant 1, she mentioned that writing multiple drafts was something quite new to her. Participant 1 stated,

> You know in China, everything is once and you cannot do the second time. This is the principle and you cannot change it. Here, there are lots of chances to fix it. They [writing instructors] give us the feeling that you can have the next chance and for English, I think it is good to write more than once.

Participants 2, 5 and 14 individually mentioned that working on the same piece of writing more than once enabled them to better express their thoughts in writing. As Participant 5 put it, "I feel this method is pretty good. I can constantly reflect on what I write, which allows me to revise more. I can develop my thoughts deeper." Sharing a very similar view, Participant 2 felt that she was able to convey her views best in print because she believed that her refined text would usually be better organized with effective sentences and with more detailed information. Participant 2 stated,

you have a chance to do better in the second draft and you paid attention to some mistakes you have. You have much time to read to analyze the topic you have. I would use a very strong sentence because I would think about it more.

Since these student writers wrote in L2 and would inevitably make mistakes, 13 interview participants reported that having multiple chances to review their papers allowed them to identify and to eliminate their grammatical and mechanical related mistakes. For instance, being able to write an English essay more than once was valuable to Participant 8 because "I have more time to organize my papers and to notice or pay attention to any weaknesses I have done or the stupid mistakes I have done." The aforementioned statements made by interview participants to some extent aligned with the positive response made by this survey participant; that is, focusing on the process "force[ed] me to figure out a better essay and to fix more essential mistakes."

Become cognizant of and make improvement on one's weaknesses. Ten students perceived that focusing on the process of writing and revising helped them become aware of their shortcomings. Knowing their potential writing weaknesses, these students could then concentrate on improving them to become better L2 writers. For instance, Participant 14 reported that drafting and reformulating what he had produced assisted him in becoming aware of and remembering what particular kind of grammatical mistakes he tended to make and he would then try to avoid making similar mistakes in the subsequent writing. Participant 11 summed up the benefits she had gained from process writing pedagogy by saying,

writing three times can help me focus on errors and mistakes I made in my writing and in my assignments and teach me how to write in a more professional way and tell me which details I am not good in English writing. I think this way of writing can improve me.

Participant 7 reported that writing multiple drafts was one of the new learning experiences she had since she arrived in Canada. She found this particular writing approach suited her own learning style. This student also mentioned in the interview that merely writing each essay more than once was insufficient to make her a good writer. She believed that engaging in multiple drafts of writing allowed her to discover her weaknesses so that she could target these weaknesses for improvement, just like Participant 14. Similar to what Participant 1 indicated before, Participant 7 also reported that in China, most of the homework was just done once. She mentioned that her commitment to the assignment often ended once it was submitted. When teachers returned her work, she glanced at the mark and moved on to the next assignment because she was not required to rework on it any more. She seldom thought of what area she performed well or what area she needed to work on more. However, as she was required to rework her drafts here, she had to pay attention to her teacher's comments, note her weaknesses, and try to improve what she had produced in print. Such a process "give[s] us some room to progress [and] give[s] me some time to practice. Let us think about our essays and find some ways to make it better" (Participant 7).

Both Participants 7 and 11 also reported that this writing approach made them become more committed to improving their weaknesses. As Participant 11's writing instructor often asked her to be concise in her writing, she knew exactly what she needed

to improve in her revision; that is, to avoid being wordy. She perceived that each revision offered her opportunity to practice expressing her idea clearly but without unnecessary information. In a similar vein, Participant 7 reported that in her previous composition course, one common piece of feedback she had received from her writing instructor was that she had some logic issues in her essays. During that entire semester, she targeted that weakness and was working quite hard to improve it among all the papers she did for the course. Although she still struggled with English writing logic, she was now more cognizant of what she had to do in order for her teachers to understand her writing better. She believed that she had made some gradual improvement through receiving substantial feedback and engaging in the revision process as her current composition instructor did not point out as many logic related weaknesses in her writing as the previous one.

While several participants claimed that working on their papers multiple times enabled them to detect their weaknesses by themselves, I noted that not all interview participants shared such a view, especially when the weaknesses were on macro aspects of the text. Participant 13 felt that it was essential for him to work with someone, such as his instructor, in order to help detect his writing weaknesses. Except for simple grammatical errors, he did not think he could revise his papers well on his own, especially for organizational and content related weaknesses. Such a need, working with a much more knowledgeable one, was also voiced by Participants 1, 2, 5, 10 and 12; they needed someone to help point out their weaknesses and suggest possible solutions.

Target one specific area for improvement in each revision. In the study, all of my interview participants reported that their composition instructors would often only

focus on one aspect of their written text in each evaluation. The students were informed by their instructors that that more attention would be paid to macro aspects of the paper in the first draft and more on micro aspects of the paper in the second draft. The final evaluation would be on the overall quality of the papers. Five students expressed that they really liked such an evaluation procedure because by knowing what the focus of each evaluation, they could concentrate on improving one particular area in each round of their revision.

Practice makes perfect. As clichéd as it may seem, the phrase "practice makes perfect" was also mentioned frequently by several interview students. Participant 4 stated that "I feel it [process writing] is very good for people whose first language is not English. I think if you have more practices, you would be better than before." Participant 13 reported that he did not find himself enjoying process writing, but he understood the logic behind the pedagogy; that is, no one could perform a perfect job in just one attempt. "Everyone wants to do things once and nobody wants to do it twice but if you want to improve it, you have to do more times." As mentioned before, many of these students believed that if they spent more time on the essay, their ideas would be better developed and explained more clearly. As well, their papers would also contain fewer grammatical errors. Being L2 learners, they also felt that each time they worked on the essay was an opportunity for them to practice composing in English and practicing English grammar. As they felt that they not only practiced writing more often but also worked on refining their written texts through engaging in process writing, they would become more familiar with English writing as well as its writing conventions. Some students also mentioned

that they could build a strong vocabulary because their instructors often reminded them to incorporate new academic words they just learned in each revision. The perceived enhancement in their knowledge of writing and L2 language could lead them to face lesser writing difficulty later in their university study.

Overall, a majority of the interview participants held a positive view toward process writing pedagogy, although some unfavourable statements were also identified among the interview data. Participant 3 was the only interview student who mentioned that engaging in process writing wasted his time although a couple of survey participants also expressed a similar idea that writing more than two drafts was a waste of time.

Multiple drafts of writing wastes time. As mentioned in the participant's personal profile, Participant 3 held a very negative view toward his ESL training at MUN, and he particularly resented the fact that he had to spend five semesters in the ESL division, which he felt it was a waste of his time and unnecessary. Except for his first term of training in the ESL division, Participant 3 did not see himself improve much in writing as he stated, "the teachers did not teach us something special, just similar things. Write, write, and rewrite. Every term is really really similar." Perhaps because of his negative attitude toward his ESL training, he found working on the same paper more than once repetitive. He disliked doing multiple drafts because he perceived that "most students just copy whatever in the previous draft and they do not think about look[ing] at their mistakes." When he was asked if revision was important, he agreed it was, but he pointed out that working on the same essay more than once was not the only way to make improvements and he did not perceive such an approach effective. As he stated, "I think

students can make [keep] a notebook and note what the problem. We do not need to copy everything." He considered keeping a record of his own common grammatical mistakes in a notebook and constantly reviewing them were far more effective ways for him to improve his writing than simply copying what he wrote three times. While other participants reported that process writing helped them learn and better remember their own mistakes, Participant 3 perceived it as very tedious and repetitive. Although Participant 10 and 14 never stated that writing multiple drafts was a wasting of time, they, in several occasions, also mentioned that writing twice was sufficient and they did not find the third time revision useful. Participant 10 stated that she normally made no changes in her last draft and she sometimes felt that the time that she had spent working on the texts for the third time could have been better spent on learning a different type of English writing.

Lack of direct instruction. As mentioned in the literature review section, one of the common criticisms toward process writing pedagogy is its lack of explicit attention and instruction on various written genre expectations (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Hyland, 2003). In the study, such a concern was individually voiced by Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 12, 13, and 14 because they found that they often had a very vague idea with regard to planning and structuring some of the assigned essays as well as using the required citation practices. They felt that there was very little direct instruction or even no direct instruction about their writing assignments in their composition courses. For instance, having written the assigned synthesis essay three times, Participant 10 and 12 claimed that they still knew very little about what exactly a synthesis essay was and what the

standard requirement for American Psychological Association (APA) was. Participant 10

commented, "the writing instructor just told us to read about synthesis and to google how

to use APA style and reference." Participant 12 found that her instructor never provided a

clear instruction on how one should approach each assigned essay in the class. When I

was helping this particular student work on revising her synthesis essay, she also

appeared to know very little about the assignment.

> R: In this synthesis, what did your teacher teach about synthesis essays?
> P 12: Just combine ideas on these two articles.
> R: And make it an essay?
> P 12: Yes.
> R: Did your teacher assign a topic?
> P 12: No.
> R: When your teacher said "combine two articles into one essay", did the teacher say how many paragraphs?
> P 12: no, nothing, just write an essay.
> R: Is it a 5 paragraph essay?
> P 12: The writing *teacher* said nothing and just said [to use] two sources.

Participant 12 claimed that all she knew was to incorporate both assigned reading

materials into her essay. Feeling confused and a little bit frustrated, this student found it

quite difficult to tackle this particular essay assignment because "Um, I just do not know

the organization."

Facing a similar challenge, Participant 1 found writing a good summary quite

challenging, especially when no clear guidelines were given in class. This student

reported that her teacher never spent time discussing how to plan a summary essay nor

provided "any outline" prior to writing. When I asked the student to clarify what she

meant by an outline, she responded, "how to write the essay, how to write the

introduction and the body paragraphs. I now do not know how to write a summary. I do

not know the structure of a summary. I do not know." As I began observing Participant 1's composition class after the entire cycle of the summary essay was completed, I was unsure if her instructor provided a lecture on summary essays. Among three other participants who were taught by the same instructor as Participant 1, conflicting statements were found regarding whether or not the instructor taught how to structure a summary essay. Two students indicated that the instructor did go through the structure of the essay and one said the instructor did not. When I began observing Participant 1's classes, I observed that the instructor did not discuss how to structure their second essay assignment, but she went through very detailed instructions on how to structure the last paper, a research paper, before students were tasked to write it. After my observation of how to structure a research paper, I followed up with the student in our third interview and asked how she felt about writing the research paper. Surprisingly, her attitude toward the instructor changed. She responded positively that she did not have any major difficulty writing the research paper and felt quite confident doing the assignment because "my teacher went through the steps and show examples and outline of what a research paper should look like. It is very good." It was quite evident that Participant 1 needed clear instruction on how to structure the assigned essay so that she could feel confident doing the task.

In fact, it is quite understandable why this student felt such a need when we apply Vygotsky's zone of proximal development to explain such a situation. For Participant 1 along with a couple of my other interview participants, composing in English was quite a new experience. Although they had some experience in composing in English and

possessed a certain amount of grammatical knowledge, they lacked the experience of structuring and composing various types of English genres. They needed more initial guidance in the beginning, such as what the structure should look like. They then could better perform the task with ease.

Little or no instruction on revision. While participants 1, 2, 10, 12, 13, and 14 were struggling with structuring the assigned essays, Participant 12 was one of the two participants who actually verbalized her difficulty with revision, the core of process writing. According to her, she constantly worried about revising her papers for her composition course. Although she recognized that engaging in multiple drafts of writing had its pedagogical value as no one could write a perfect essay just by doing a single draft; she found herself struggling with revision. She reported that she could not recall any of the lectures in her composition course discussing how to revise. She felt that she was expected to know how to revise; however, "If I have no idea about how to revise it, maybe it will take me a lot of hours to do it but I do not enjoy it." When I asked other participants if how to revise was discussed in class, none could recall any of their class lectures focusing on revision. Four participants indicated that their writing instructors would sometimes discuss common errors that the instructors noticed among students' essays and would discuss how to eliminate them. For instance, Participant 7 stated that her instructor would often present power point slides on their common grammatical errors right after their in-class drafts were evaluated. The instructor would go through each error listed on the slides, explain why it was an error, show them how to eliminate it, and provide similar exercises for students to practice. Although learning about their common

errors in class was informative, Participant 7 mentioned that sometimes she might not pay attention to such a lecture because she often found that she did not make those mistakes.

Participant 3 also mentioned this teaching approach, instructors going through common mistakes in class, during the interview. Similar to what Participant 7 reported, this student also mentioned that he often did not really pay attention to it because he felt that he often did not make those mistakes pointed out in the class. In the literature, it is not uncommon to find recommendations that suggest instructors go through common mistakes or weaknesses to the whole class so that students could learn how to avoid making them. However, the attitudes these two students described toward this particular teaching strategy demonstrated how challenging it could be for an instructor to conduct an effective lecture that would meet different learning needs. Because of diverse individual needs, this approach, although often recommended in the literature, may not be appreciated by all the students in class.

While the instructors of Participants 3 and 7 would show them how to avoid common grammatical errors in class, Participants 8 and 11 stated that their instructors sometimes provided guidance on how to avoid macro aspects of errors, such as how to be concise. For instance, Participant 11 mentioned that her writing instructor would provide the class with some of the sentences derived from students' essays and ask students to work together to revise these sentences in order to be concise. Participant 11 found it extremely useful because she felt that she developed a better understanding of what being concise meant through practice and such an exercise also enabled her to respond better to comments that required her to be concise.

Discussion

As mentioned in the literature section, one of the main critiques with regard to process writing is lack of explicit instruction on how and what to write. Although some of my interview students also voiced such a concern, the findings of my study led me to disagree with this common critique. I noticed that while a group of my interview participants voiced their concerns about not receiving sufficient instructions and guidance on how to structure the assigned essays, three interview participants reported that they were given very detailed instructions and appropriate guidance on how to structure each essay prior to each writing task. I believe that this issue might have more to do with each individual composition instructor's teaching practices, rather than the inherent weakness of the pedagogy itself.

I also believe that the instructor's knowledge and understanding of L2 students and their needs also played a role. Among the three participants who received instruction on how to structure essays, I noted that their first-year composition instructors were also instructors in the ESL program, whereas the instructors for participants 1, 2, 10, 12, and 14 were not specially trained in teaching L2 students. Perhaps ESL trained specialists have more experience working with L2 students so that they may know better in what aspects of writing L2 students might need more guidance. Therefore, these ESL trained instructors would tend to provide more direct instruction on how to compose in English. In fact, one of my observed instructors admitted that she did not receive any professional training in working with ESL students. She still found it a little challenging to provide an explanation of grammatical rules when grammar-related questions were raised in class.

Since she was not particularly trained to teach ESL, sometimes she found that it was a barrier in teaching efficiently. The teacher also believed that her accumulative teaching experience with this particular group of students had enabled her to know them better and to improve her teaching competence and approaches.

Although it was found that a majority of survey participants perceived that process writing pedagogy could enhance their writing competency, such a positive view was not shared by all of the interview participants. Some interview participants believed that the more they practiced, the better their writing ability could become. Participants 1, 4, 10, 12, 13 and 14 did not hold such a positive view and a couple of them even found this writing approach tedious and time consuming. In fact, the existing research findings in this area are still inconclusive (Ferris, 2003); we are still unsure if engaging in multiple drafts could actually help student writers become better writers in the long run. Some studies have found that students improved the quality of one single essay through multiple revision opportunities; the same students did not perform any better in a brand new writing assignment (see Truscott & Hus, 2008). In other words, the knowledge and skills students have learned from one task may not easily be transferred or may not be applicable to a new task.

In my review of literature, I noted that little has been discussed about the efficacy of process writing on the development of students' writing competency although I recognized that some studies had been conducted to determine if a process writing approach could better improve students' grammatical performance on a new piece of writing (see Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). In this

dissertation, I attempted to offer some explanations on why at least some of my interview participants were ambivalent about the process of writing pedagogy and the enhancement of their writing ability.

First of all, during my analysis of the interview data, I noted that the instructor's feedback practice and teaching practice seemed to play a role in why Participants 1, 4, 10, 12, 13 and 14 were unsure about whether process writing pedagogy could enhance their writing ability. As mentioned before, process writing instruction was utilized in the ESL program as well as in the first year composition courses at this university. Without any hesitation, both Participants 1 and 12 reported that they felt their writing ability was greatly improved when they were in the ESL program. Participant 1 reported that her instructors in the ESL program would often spend time explaining the comments to her and showing her ways to improve her texts. She also reported that she did not obtain that kind of attention in her current first-year composition course and she stated, "A lot of time I am not really sure what the comments are[meant] and I do not really know how to fix it and the teacher has a bad writing" (Participant 1). The same participant also did not find her writing ability had improved much after having completed the ESL program. She stated, "If teachers can tell us how to repair it [mistakes] and how to write a good essay next time, I think it is good but sometimes teachers just give you the points without telling you what is wrong with it and it is not good" (Participant 1).

Participants 10, 12, 13, and 14 who were in the same writing course also did not see themselves improve their writing skills perhaps due to the limited feedback they had obtained from their composition instructor. In their composition course, they hardly

received any content and essay structure related feedback on their papers. Although these students worked on their papers more than once, they felt they were not capable of making meaningful changes related to macro aspects of the papers without any direct guidance. Participant 12 reported that she often did not know what the right organization was for the assigned paper, and thus she often felt her organization was weak. Without gaining any feedback on the organization, she felt a sense of helplessness in making organizational changes on her own. She felt that reworking the papers numerous times would not automatically enable her to improve her organization because she was not able to make any modification on the area she did not know much about. As Participant 12 was not yet a competent L2 writer and certainly was not confident about how she had organized her paper, she craved guidance and feedback to enable her to learn where she needed to improve. Without any feedback, she could not see herself improve in writing merely by reworking the drafts on her own.

I also suspect that how much time one has experienced with process writing could also play a role when students judged if such a writing process improved their writing ability, which has not been discussed much in the existing feedback and revision studies. Participants 2, 10 and 13 recognized that writing more than one draft could improve the quality of their essays because at least some of the grammatical errors and careless mistakes could be eliminated. Participant 2 also felt that she could use more effective sentences to best convey her points through numerous revision changes. The fact that they received a higher mark in their final draft is also an indication to them that the quality of their final drafts was better. They all mentioned that process writing was still

fairly new to them. When the interview took place, three of them had only experienced process writing for two months. It was unrealistic for them to think that they had improved their writing competency within such a short period of time, especially when they all believed that it would often take a long time for one to improve one's writing competency. Perhaps due to their limited exposure to process writing, they also felt that this approach could not affect their writing ability. They still found structuring academic essays challenging and they were often unsure how to do so properly. Future researchers may be interested in exploring if having more experience with process writing would affect the learner's attitude toward the efficacy of process writing on one's writing ability.

In summary, more than 80% of survey participants and in-depth interview participants seemed to favour process writing instruction. Focusing on the writing process was reported to help these students learn their weaknesses in writing and eliminate errors in their texts, which could potentially result in a better paper or a better grade. On the other hand, preparing more than one draft often required student writers to spend more time, and some survey participants felt it demanded too much work, which may not be worth it because the reality was that other courses and examinations only require one-time writing. These student writers might have felt that it would have been more important for them to learn how to write well in their first attempt as they did not have any opportunity to learn their teacher's feedback and fix the errors when they took their examination. A small number of survey participants as well as interview students also felt that working on their essays twice was sufficient because they did not find themselves making any meaningful changes in their last draft.

Some interview participants also reported that they had not obtained clear instruction on how to structure the assigned academic essays and how to revise their papers properly, which led to them feeling confused and puzzled during their writing and revision process. In contrast to the common critique that process writing pedagogy lacks explicit instruction, some of the difficulties faced by the students might be caused by individual instructors' teaching practices as well as their knowledge of L2 students. I also perceived that the length of time students were exposed to process writing could also be a factor when they judged whether or not process writing could enhance their writing ability. In the next section, I discuss how my participants responded to teacher feedback.

Response to Teacher Feedback

What do students usually do after they receive teacher commentaries? Is there any particular type of feedback that ESL students tend to pay more attention to? What challenges do they face when deciphering teacher feedback? These questions are crucial to any instructor utilizing process writing pedagogy because the findings can shed light on the disparities between what students need and what teachers provide. By developing a fuller understanding of how students react to and manage teacher commentaries, instructors can be in a better position to fine tune their feedback approaches to best meet the needs of students.

In the study, students, surveyed or interviewed, were generally found to value their teacher commentaries. While a large portion of survey participants claimed to pay attention to macro related aspects of feedback in the early drafts, such a pattern was not found among all of the interview participants. Instead, at least some interview students

were found to have the tendency to attend to only surface related feedback, not because of valuing surface feedback more, but perhaps due to their instructors' feedback approaches, their personal belief about their own writing weaknesses and their personal belief about the function of the writing class.

What Did Survey Participants Do with Their Essays?

Survey Question 13 asked students if they re-read their papers once they obtained them from their instructors. Survey Question 14 was used to explore how much attention student writers paid to their teacher's feedback. Table 6 illustrates the selection results of Question 13.

Table 6

How Much of Each Essay Do You Read Over When Your Writing Instructor Returns It to You?

	All	Most	Some	None
	Number of responses/ percentages			
First/Second Drafts	41 / 39%	44 / 43%	17/ 17%	1 / 1%
Final Drafts	25 / 24%	36/ 35%	38/ 37%	3 / 3%

Note: 1. One survey participant did not respond to the section items for the final draft and thus the number of the survey respondents only added up to 102.
2. All the percentages are calculated based on a total population of 103 students.

Among all the selection items provided in Question 13, 85 students (82%) indicated that they would re-read all or most of their papers for their first and second drafts; 61 respondents (59%) would re-read all or most of their final papers. As I often had doubts whether students read their papers, it was an encouraging sign to see such a

high percentage of students who would revisit their papers. The finding that more than 80% of the students would re-read their first and second drafts might also be influenced by how the writing course was structured. In these first year writing courses, students were required to rework their drafts. Because they had to revise, they might be more prone to read what they had produced in order to make revision changes. This confirms the claim that if feedback is to be of any use to L2 students, students should be given opportunities to act on it (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Table 7 illustrates how much attention students would pay to their teacher feedback between the preliminary drafts and the final draft.

Table 7

How Much of the Instructor's Comments And Corrections Did You Think about Carefully?

	All	Most	Some	None
	Number of Survey Responses/Percentages			
First/Second Drafts	65/63%	32/31%	6/6%	0/0%
Final Drafts	57/55%	27/26%	16/16%	3/3%

Ninety-seven survey participants (94%) indicated that they attended to all or most of their teacher commentary in the first and second drafts; 84 survey respondents (81%) attended to all or most of their teachers' feedback in the final drafts. It appeared that these ESL students valued their teacher commentary highly, which adds additional evidence to the claim that ESL students generally value and pay great attention to their

teachers' feedback (Brice, 1995; Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 1998; Kaweera, 2007; Maarof, Yamat, & Li, 2011; Othman & Mohamad 2009). As a writing instructor, I was a little surprised to discover such a high percentage because it was not uncommon in my own class to see students re-submit their papers without addressing any of the feedback. One of the assumptions I had often made was that these student did not care about feedback. The present finding proved my simplistic assumption incorrect. Other factors might have impeded them in their revision process and uncovering these factors might help improve the efficacy of my feedback practices. Nevertheless, it is comforting to know that students in the present study displayed a positive attitude toward teacher feedback. For me, this finding offers reassurances that the time and efforts I had spent on commenting on students' work is worth it as students in general view teachers' comments highly.

When comparing students' reactions to teacher feedback on preliminary and final drafts, I noticed that the survey respondents would be more likely to re-read their papers and to pay more attention to teacher commentary in the preliminary drafts. This particular finding also coincided with Ferris' (1995) finding. Perhaps these students paid more attention to comments in the first and second drafts because revision was required. As students were no longer required to rework the last draft once they obtained the mark from the instructor, they might view the task as complete so that there was no urgent need to read the comments. Overall, a high percentage of the participants were found to pay close attention to and value the feedback from their instructors.

Attention That Survey Participants Allocated to Each Type of Feedback

Survey Question 15 asked the students to indicate which type of comments they would be prone to pay attention to when they read their teacher's feedback. Table 8 illustrates the responses that the participants made.

Table 8

Attention *Students Pay to Each Type of Comments and Corrections*

First and Second Drafts						
	A lot	Some	A little	None	Not Applicable	# of respondents
Organization	61	27	11	3	1	103
Content/Ideas	62	32	8	1	0	103
Vocabulary	47	37	13	4	0	101
Grammar	55	34	10	3	1	103
Mechanics	38	33	28	1	0	100

Final Products						
	A lot	Some	A little	None	Not Applicable	# of respondents
Organization	36	41	19	6	1	102
Content/Ideas	40	36	21	5	0	102
Vocabulary	46	31	19	6	0	102
Grammar	47	33	16	5	0	101
Mechanics	31	36	28	4	0	99

Note: In some rows, the total number of respondents did not add up to 103 due to survey participants not making any selections.

Among the respondents who claimed to pay a lot of attention, they seemed to pay more attention to feedback related to the macro aspects of their texts, such as organization

and content and ideas in their preliminary drafts. In the final drafts, these students would tend to pay a little bit more attention to the feedback related to micro aspects of their writing. I suspected that such a pattern might be related to how their teachers sequenced their feedback practices and this was later confirmed by my interview participants as I would discuss in the interview section.

From the survey data, the students who claimed to pay just a little attention to teacher commentary seemed to be quite interested in learning the mechanics related errors among all the drafts. The students who reported paying a lot of attention to teacher commentary demonstrated a pattern in which more attention was paid to organization and content/ideas orientated feedback in the preliminary drafts. In the final drafts, this group of students appeared to pay slightly more attention to issues related to vocabulary and grammar. An opposite pattern was identified for the group of the students who claimed to pay only some attention to teacher commentary. This group of students appeared to pay more attention to feedback related to micro aspects of their texts in the preliminary drafts. In the final drafts, they would attend more to organization oriented feedback, noting that attention to content/ideas as well as mechanics related issues were not far behind.

I now examine in what conditions the survey participants would decide to ignore feedback.

Situations When Survey Participants Decided to Ignore Teacher Commentary

Although students value teacher commentaries, sometimes they may decide not to pay attention to the comments. Being informed about these potential factors can help L2 instructors develop a fuller understanding of teacher commentary and student response

and avoid creating similar conditions that dissuade students to utilize teacher commentaries. Table 9 illustrates the situation in which students chose to ignore teacher commentary.

Table 9

Situations in Which Students Decided to Ignore Teacher Commentary

	Number of Survey Respondents
When I did not understand the comments	16
When I had other papers due	22
When my marks from previous drafts were not good	4
When I was in a rush to finish the revised essay	39
When I did not agree with the comments	36

Note: 1. Survey respondents could choose more than one option in this question.
2. 8 students did not respond to this question.

As the table illustrates, being in a rush to finish the revised paper and not agreeing with the comments were the two options chosen most by the survey participants. I noted that the percentage of the responses for each of these two options was much lower than 50%, which seemed once again to support the claim that ESL students generally value teacher commentary (Ferris, 2003; Leki, 2006).

In addition to choosing the selection options provided in the questions, ten survey participants also wrote their own responses for Question 21 indicating that they never ignored teacher commentary. One other survey participant stated that the only time he/she would not pay much attention to the comments was when he/she had already

known the problems pointed out in the comments. Two survey respondents added that "Not knowing how to revise" would make them decide to ignore the comments. Table 10 illustrates situations in which students decided not to revise.

Table 10

Situations in Which Students Decided Not to Revise

	number of survey respondents
I did not have time to revise as I had many other papers to write	42
I did not know how to fix my errors	17
I did not find that revising could help improve my essay	10
English writing course is not important	3
I did not understand the comments	13
I did not get a good mark	9

Note: 1. Survey respondents could choose more than one option in this question.
2. 17 students did not respond to this question.

The survey participants were found to value their writing courses because very few participants chose the option of English courses not being important as their reason for not revising. I found that 42 students selected the option of "I did not have time to revise as I had many other papers to write." This data seemed to suggest that when many assignments were due at the same time, these students might have the tendency to choose to complete other course papers over revising their composition papers. Some possible explanations for such a pattern would be provided in the interview section. In addition to choosing the selection options provided in the questions, seven students reported that they always revised. One other student reported that not knowing how to revise would make

him/her decide not to revise. As I was often challenged by at least some students about their essay marks, I also wondered if receiving a low mark would play a role in whether student writers decided to revise or not. Among my survey participants, not getting a good mark did not appear to play a key role to dissuade them from revising because only nine survey participants selected this option.

Overall, most survey respondents in the study were found to value and pay attention to feedback provided by their instructors, especially commentaries on preliminary drafts. The top three selections that the survey participants selected as their reasons for ignoring their instructors' feedback were being in a rush to complete the assignment, not agreeing with the comments as well as having other course papers due at the same time. While these students might have various reasons why they decided not to revise their composition papers, having many other papers due at the same time was found to be the most selected reason.

What Interview Participants Did with Teacher Feedback

Conducting in-depth interviews with each of my interview participants allowed me to develop a better picture of what each of them did when they obtained their drafts from their composition instructors. Because I also had their actual drafts to work with, I was able to learn how they went about their revision and if what they reported (e.g., what aspects of writing they paid more attention to) aligned with what they actually did, instead of just descriptive data collected from the survey. For instance, Participant 6 reported that he generally valued his composition instructor's feedback, but he also reported that he tended to pay attention to grammatical feedback and would often only

revise grammatical errors. What he reported was confirmed when I examined his revision patterns among his drafts. Moreover, in-depth interviews also allowed me to uncover personal factors as well as contextual factors that might have influenced one's revision decision, which might not be easily captured in survey questionnaires. For example, Participant 12 reported that she found revising her paper challenging because she did not know how to revise and what she needed to revise. Examining her written samples and interviewing her numerous times, I noted that her instructor's feedback approach, giving only feedback on grammatical weaknesses, appeared to impede her from tackling other aspects of her writing because she did not know where to start.

In general, 13 out of 14 interview participants were found to hold a fairly positive attitude toward process writing pedagogy and recognized the benefits of revising their papers. Revising was not an easy task for at least some of them, which echoes the claim made by Myhill and Jones (2007) that being able to revise one's writing well is, in fact, a difficult skill to learn and student writers usually face numerous difficulties in revision. Among all types of writers, novice or weaker writers have been found that they often face more challenges in revision because they are usually weak in "self-monitoring just what their writing problems are" (Pea & Kurland, 1987; p. 295) and they may also possess limited knowledge and tactics to help solve the identified problem. In addition, the revisions that inexperienced writers tend to make are often surface-level and writing convention changes, such as spelling (Fitzgerald, 1987; Sze, 2002).

On the other hand, revision is often viewed in the west as a process consisting of "text reviewing, aiming at evaluating and improving the text quality ..., and ... evaluating

and clarifying the writer's thoughts ..." (Chanquoy, 2001, p. 16). Because writing is viewed as a social activity (Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2007), revising effectively often demands the writer to consider "the text's communicative quality" (Beal, 1996, as cited in Chanquoy, 2001, p. 16). In other words, the writer needs to consider whether the text is written clearly so that the potential reader can make sense of it. However, this view toward revision is not shared universally. What effective revision means in western academia might mean something very different among L2 and international students because "they [L2 students] may naturally view revision in solely punitive terms as a means to correct surface mistakes without even trying to develop and refine content" (Kielinkska, 2006, p. 67-68).

As noted in the earlier section, none of the survey participants indicated that they would pay attention to only surface oriented feedback. They claimed that they would attend to all aspects of the paper especially for the groups that paid all or some attention to teacher commentary (see Table 8). Such a pattern was not found in the interview data. Not all of my fourteen interview participants held the same view toward what they should do during revision. Some felt that it was vital to make both content and surface revisions so that a good quality of written text could be produced. The others equated the act of revision solely with the elimination of surface errors.

Six interview participants (Participants 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, and 13) reported that they were prone to pay more attention to grammar related feedback and making surface-level revisions. Participant 10 reported that to revise her English paper was to improve her grammar and to correct all the small mistakes. This particular student also felt that she

was quite weak in organizing English essays because she had not obtained much training in structuring academic English essays prior to coming to Canada. As a consequence, she felt that she was not capable of detecting organizational related problems of her writing on her own. Since Participant 10 felt that she did not know much about the organization of English papers and since her composition instructor did not supply her with any content and organizational related feedback, she reported that she did not spend much time in making changes to her essay structure or content. She would often "just correct some small mistakes" pointed out by her instructor.

When I examined this participant's essays, I noticed that she did attempt to make substantial revisions in the content between her essay 1 draft 1 and essay 1 draft 2 although she reported that she would just make grammatical changes. Her instructor only provided grammatical corrections and some word changes on her essay 1 draft 1. I asked the student what prompted her to make changes. She indicated that she did not totally understand the assigned reading when she wrote the first draft in class. She did not comprehend the reading because she had to read the article and write in class within 75 minutes. She did her second draft at home, and she had more time to re-read the assignment, which allowed her to fully comprehend the text and thus she was able to add some crucial information to make her revised summary much more complete than the first draft. Her instructor never commented on how she did on the content when she obtained her draft 2. So, in the subsequent revision, this student only made grammatical and lexical revisions.

Participants 10, 12, and 13 were recruited from the same composition course. The fact that all three of them claimed to be attending more to surface errors made me believe that their revision pattern was to some extent correlated to types of feedback their instructor supplied. This finding adds additional support to Lee's (2008) claim that how teachers provided feedback played an influential role on how students approached their revision. As I pointed it out before, Participant 10 approached her instructor for organizational feedback, but she never obtained any. She then interpreted it as meaning that her paper contained no serious weaknesses in that particular area as she said, "I think there is nothing for me to do to improve my organization." I also noted that the advice from her peers also seemed to play a role in her revision decisions. Participant 10 mentioned that her university friends who had gone through the writing course in the previous semester advised her that if her instructor did not point out any problematic area in her writing, she should not make any further changes because such an act might potentially weaken the quality of the writing, which might result in a lower mark. Therefore, the student decided not to work on areas that her instructor did not have a problem with. Although she would sometimes feel that she needed to attend to her content, how could she make effective changes if she did not know where the weaknesses were. One could only make changes when one knows where the weaknesses exist. Without knowing them, she would just ensure that her revised paper contained as few grammatical errors as possible because she believed that it was what her teacher wanted.

Further, as I mentioned earlier, L2 students may hold quite a different view toward the common view of revision found in the western academy (Kietlinska, 2006).

While most of the participants believed that they had to attend to both macro and micro

aspects of their texts, Participant 13 certainly did not appear to view revision as a means

to re-evaluate and strengthen what he had already conveyed in print. Instead, for him, to

revise meaningfully was to produce a new piece of writing. Participant 13 stated that

> the first time I wrote anything and that is the whole idea of the paper so if you
> want me to change it, you actually is ask me to write again. Write again is the
> only way I can redo it. If you ask me to revise in a meaningful way, I cannot
> because what I wrote is what I thought at that time.

Similarly, Kietlinska (2006) describes a very similar revision attitude that one of

her ESL students displayed. Asked to revise his writing, the student asked "So you want

me to write a new paper, because this one is wrong, right?" (Kietlinska, 2006, p. 63). For

Participant 13 and Kietlinska's student, revision seemed to convey a negative

connotation; that is, what they wrote was not good enough so they had to re-write. In

fact, Participant 13 admitted that he seldom spent time revising his papers. Since revision

was required for his English course, he claimed that he would normally just spend 10 to

20 minutes on typing his draft and eliminating grammatical errors because "I just think it

is unnecessary to add anything into it and I just corrected things [his instructor] corrected

for me." Especially, he reported that his instructor did not seem to have any major issues

with his content because there was no feedback on his content. Examining his essays, I

found that most of the changes were on grammatical features or some word changes. In

fact, what he actually did in his revision was to recopy what his instructor had corrected

for him. Interestingly, although Participant 13 indicated that he did not spend much time

in his revisions, he did, on one occasion, approach me for content related feedback

because he had more spare time during that week. I suggested to him to incorporate some examples from his reading material to strengthen one of his claims. He indeed located and incorporated a relevant example into his subsequent draft. Although Participant 13 reported that he would make only micro-level revisions, I suspect that he would also make macro-level revisions, had he received such type of feedback, especially since obtaining a high mark was important to him. Perhaps because his instructor only supplied him with grammar oriented feedback, Participant 13 might also have perceived that to revise for the course meant to eliminate surface errors. I also believe that because there was no comment for him to work on global aspects of his text, he, like Participant 10, also interpreted this to mean that he performed quite well in these areas and there was no need to further improve them.

Among all the interview participants, Participant 12 appeared to be very stressed about revision. As this particular student indicated, "I do have some trouble with writing revision because I do not know I should just correct [grammatical] mistakes or you know like the organization be better or add some new ideas or change some sentences. I just correct the [grammatical] mistakes." Even though she felt she needed to revise all aspects of her paper, she was not confident enough to decide and was unsure where she needed to make changes. Instead, she concentrated on eliminating grammatical errors as pointed out by her instructor. Unlike Participant 10 and 13, Participant 12 often solicited help from others to help content and organization related issues because obtaining a good mark was important to her. For example, she would come to see me for my feedback after she made changes in her drafts based on her teacher comments. She also reported that she

visited the writing centre. During our talks, she often wanted to know how and where she could improve in her content. Although Participant 12, on numerous occasions, indicated that she did not know how to revise, she was by no means a writer who made changes passively based on the feedback suggested to her. In other words, she was quite selective in the content-related feedback suggested by me. She seemed to incorporate the suggested feedback that best fit her own plan for her paper. For instance, she claimed that she had a very weak thesis statement (in italics). She wanted to make it strong but did not know how to proceed. Below is the first paragraph taken from her revised draft of essay 2 before she submitted the draft to her teacher for the second evaluation.

> Participant 12's Text: An increasing number of lesser-known languages are disappearing rapidly today because of the ignorance of the government and related speakers. Some enlightened societies, such as Canada are re-examining their policies toward aboriginals and are helping them to revive their languages. *It brings countless benefits to society as a whole to rescue those vanishing languages.*

To better assist her to revise her thesis statement, I asked the student to talk about the focuses of her body paragraphs. She indicated that she wanted one body paragraph to discuss the benefits of these vanishing ancient languages and the other body paragraph to provide some information on the existing methods that helped rescue these languages. I then suggested to her to write a sentence that could sum up the purposes of her body paragraphs 1 and 2 as her thesis statement. She accepted the advice and changed her thesis statement. Her revised statement is presented below.

> Participant 12's revised thesis statement: Both the government and the native speakers should do their parts to rescue these vanishing languages for the numerous benefits dying languages have to society as a whole.

She took my advice because she perceived that her original thesis statement was not strong enough and she needed to improve it. However, during our talk, I also suggested to her to include a brief summary of the two assigned reading articles into her introduction section. The student did not include this suggestion in her revised draft. In the subsequent interview, I asked the student why she decided not to incorporate my suggestions for her introduction section. She reported that she was quite content about what she had included in the first paragraph. She had expressed all of her thoughts in the paragraph. Except for her thesis statement, she did not think she needed to make any more changes.

While Participant 12 was unsure how to revise when there was no feedback, Participants 4 and 6 firmly believed that revising their papers meant to eliminate their grammatical and sentence structure errors. Unlike Participant 12's instructor, the instructors of these two students supplied all types of feedback. However, Participant 4 perceived that not being able to use grammar appropriately and not being able to produce native like sentences were his main weaknesses in writing. Therefore, he prioritized these two areas for improvement. In his revision, he often concentrated on improving his linguistic and syntactic weaknesses. This particular student believed that he generally comprehended the assigned reading materials quite well and had a good understanding of the standard English academic paper format. He did not think he had any major weaknesses that needed to be revised in the content and in the organization of his essay. He also reported that he read what his teacher said about his content carefully and valued it, but "I think they [content related comments] do not really help me improve my

writing." In other words, Participant 4's revision act appeared to be influenced by his own perception of what he most needed to make improvements in his English writing.

I also identified that one's perceived function of the course appeared to have an impact on one's revision action. Participant 6 was assigned to a non-credit bearing composition course whose main focus, as he believed, was to improve the student's grammatical knowledge, not to teach academic writing. Thus, Participant 6 felt that revision for the course simply meant to eliminate all the surface errors identified by his instructor. Even though he also received abundant content related feedback, most of the time he ignored it. Comparing his first draft and revised drafts, I also noted that in his revision, he simply copied whatever his teacher had corrected and disregarded any content oriented feedback. In our interviews, Participant 6 rationalized his action by saying that to make content related changes, he would have to spend more time working on the paper. Since the writing course was a non-credit course and since he faced more challenges in his other university courses, he decided to spend very limited time in his composition course. Becasue Participant 6 knew for sure he could pass his composition course, he did not see the need to spend more efforts for the course. Interestingly, the student also mentioned that there would be some changes that he had to make when he moved on to the next "real" English course. When asked what he meant by the "real" English course, he indicated a credit-bearing course. He perceived the purpose of a credit-bearing writing course was to teach students how to write academically; he would have to attend to content feedback and to address any of his content weaknesses.

In contrast to all the participants, Participant 3 disliked revising his papers because he felt that it was a time-consuming task. He reported that it normally took him a long time to re-copy his work again. Although he did not deny the value of revision in improving one's work, he perceived that there were other effective methods that would enable students to learn their mistakes instead of copying what he wrote multiple times. Participant 3 stated that "I think students can make a notebook and note what the problem is. We do not need to copy everything." In his revised drafts, most of the revisions were made on surface level changes, noting that most of the feedback he received was on grammar oriented feedback. In fact, Participant 3's instructor only provided content related feedback in the last draft, which the student was no longer required to revise. I could not determine whether Participant 3 would have revised his content weaknesses, had he been provided with such feedback in preliminary drafts.

Although six participants seemed to focus on eliminating surface errors during revision, others viewed the act of revision as attending to both macro and micro aspects in their papers. Examining these nine students' papers, I also found that they appeared to respond to both content and surface feedback when such types of feedback were offered. Among the students who held a positive attitude toward revision, Participant 11 reported that she would often think about why she made certain mistakes and why her ideas were not expressed clearly during her revision. Although the student felt that revision could help improve the quality of her papers, she reported that she only revised for her composition courses as revision was required in the course. For her other courses, once

she had completed the assigned papers, she often did not review or revise the papers anymore.

Participants 1, 7, and 8 believed that revising what they had written was essential because they were composing in a second language. Unlike Participant 11, Participant 1 stated that she also revised for her other courses even if revision was not required. Participant 1 stated,

> You know I have a course called X [the name of the course was deleted here to protect the student's identify] and we must write a paper. I will write a draft and then send it to my instructor and he will tell me what the problem is and I will fix it and send it again.

The student reported that the course instructor did not require students to submit any working drafts, but she wanted to do so to ensure that she did her paper well. The student also felt that how effectively she revised was correlated with the quality of the feedback her instructors provided. She found that the more explicit the comments were, the better she could make changes. While Participant 1 claimed that she would often revise, Participants 8 and 14 appeared to hold a very pragmatic attitude toward revision. Since their personal agendas were to work and/or study further after their undergraduate education, they perceived that keeping a good academic record was quite important to them. Because the writing course was based on the multiple-draft writing instruction, Participant 14 reported that he had to revise in order to obtain a good mark. Even though Participant 14 only received grammar related feedback, he would also attempt to revise his content from time to time when he could sense something strange or wrong in his written work. He reported that without feedback on this area, he would just revise his

content based on his instinct as he stated, "When I read my essay again, if I find something weird, I just want to fix it." Similarly, Participant 8 believed that revising her papers could bring a direct reward; that is, a good mark.

> R: you said it is your habit to revise your English papers. Why?
> P8: Because I am not so familiar with this language and I know I might have some mistakes when I was writing, especially the mistakes I know why it is wrong. So I need to revise it before I submit it.
> R: Is getting a good mark important to you?
> P8: Yeah, that's why I put [revise] so much.

I noted that in some of her essay drafts, her composition instructor might not give her a better mark after she reported that she had spent a lot of effort on it. Obtaining a lower mark or the same mark after revision was also experienced by Participants 2 and 13. However, their ways to deal with such an issue also varied. Participant 8 mentioned that she often felt very disappointed when she obtained a lower mark, but she said she would not dwell on it too long as she believed teachers generally would not treat students unfairly. She felt that if her papers were well written and well articulated, her teacher would have given her a good mark. Although she might not be content about the mark, she had to keep working hard improving her writing. Unlike Participant 8, Participant 2 felt that obtaining a mark lower than what she had expected, to some degree, de-motivated her to revise.

> P2: When I see the mark in the first one and the second one, to be honest, the second one I worked hard on it. And for my part, I think it is the best thing I can do. For the third one, I would just correct grammar and the spelling and for the ideas and for the construction of the paragraphs, I cannot think any better. So that is why in the third draft, I feel more constrained and I just make sure the grammar and the spelling.
> R: So for you, you think for the first draft to the second draft, the mark may not really show the efforts you put in?

P2: Yes, I spent more efforts on the second draft. I was satisfied for the second draft. I put more efforts in it and I was expecting I would get a little bit better. I was a little disappointed. So when it came to the third one, I feel like I do not know how to change more so I did not really change much.

During our interview section, it was evident that Participant 2 felt somewhat disappointed about the marks she received on her Essay 2. She felt that she had put in much effort in improving the quality of her in-class draft, but such a small increase of 0.25 in marks (3.25 in class draft; 3.5 second draft) did not justify her efforts. When I examined her drafts, I could see that she had made some major changes in the content and the organization as well in her second draft. Although from time to time the flow of her second draft seemed to be interrupted due to her syntactic and lexical constraints, overall her second draft was a much improved draft.

Also experiencing receiving a lower mark after revision, Participant 13 reported that he went to question his instructor why he did not obtain a better mark and the student was not pleased by the response.

P13: *The writing instructor* said "it does not matter. Usually I corrected, marked a second draft more strictly and more seriously than the first draft. The mark to[might] be less than the first but it does not matter and I can give you a higher mark."

After putting some efforts on reworking his draft, this particular student expected some positive rewards from the instructor.

P13: Of course, it [a higher grade] does matter for me but it does not matter for *the writing instructor* because in *the writing instructor's* opinion, the most important thing is that I made the improvement and it does not matter if I have a higher mark. But it does matter for me.

The student further shared his view toward receiving a lower mark.

P13: To be honest, I think I do not want to represent everyone. Everyone wants a higher mark. I do not think you could be a normal human being to say that making improvement is more important than obtaining higher marks. Yeah, the mark is the thing that motivates me to do things.

To sum up, a majority of the interview participants held a favourable attitude toward revision; however, how they approached revision was varied. One participant held a negative view partly due to his negative attitude toward his ESL training prior to entering his university composition course. He also did not enjoy revising as he believed he only spent time copying down what he had written from the previous draft, which could not help him develop his writing competence. Six interview participants claimed that they were prone to make surface-level revision changes due to various reasons. The instructor's feedback practice seemed to play a role in students' revision focus. Not really knowing what to do in the revision and experiencing more difficulties in other academic courses could also influence the students to make superficial revisions. One's personal agenda for study, one's perceived writing weaknesses and one's perceived value of the composition course were also found to affect one's revision behaviour. Finally, some interview students viewed marks as important. They also felt that obtaining a higher mark after revision as an indication that they had improved or a reward for their efforts. Receiving a lower mark after revision, to some degree, had the potential to dissuade them from spending more efforts in revision.

Discussion

More than 90% of the students in this study appeared to value teacher feedback, but not all students held the same view toward what one should do during the revision. This finding concurs with Kietlinska's claim (2006) that what effective revision meant in the west might mean different from what it meant elsewhere. Surprisingly, I also found that not all the writing instructors seemed to share the same western view of revision, which might also explain why some instructors only provided a particular kind of feedback. As I have illustrated the issue earlier, I noted that at least one instructor's feedback practice seemed to suggest that revision meant to clean up the written text because all of the written comments were on grammatical weaknesses, none on other aspects of the text. Much literature has discussed that L2 students may possess different views toward revision (see Kielinska, 2006), and they may be prone to revise superficially. Not many studies have taken place to look into instructors' views toward revision. This line of inquiry is also important because instructors normally play an important role in student learning. If instructors do not perceive that effective revisions mean to make meanings clear and only correct grammatical errors, how can ESL students who are from different cultural and educational backgrounds be guided to develop this kind of awareness.

Second, although process writing pedagogy was adopted in the writing curriculum, my data also suggested that not all the writing instructors seemed to share the same understanding of process writing pedagogy. Some instructors provided content and form related feedback, some only provided form related feedback, and some would only

provide content related feedback in the last draft when revision was no longer required. These teaching variations bear some teaching and learning repercussions. I believe the goal of writing curriculum is to enable student writers to be better writers through engaging them in planning, drafting, revising, and editing; however, some of the interview students were not given the opportunity to do so. They did not seem to be guided to learn how to reformulate their thoughts to make them clear. Instead, they were simply expected to rewrite what they had produced.

As noted in the literature review, Goldstein (2004) and Ferris (2003) have argued that to better understand how students respond to teacher commentary, researchers can not just focus on analyzing students' written texts. Contextual factors and individual factors are crucial to help develop a comprehensive understanding of how students react to teacher feedback. The findings of this study support their claim and illustrate the importance of examining these contextual and personal factors, especially when six of the interview students appeared to hold very different reasons why they would be prone to make surface-related changes in their revisions.

Each one of the six participants held a very different reason why they tended to make surface-related changes. These reasons would not be uncovered if one only examined their written texts or only interviewed the students. One's perceived weaknesses in writing, one's perceived function of the writing course, one's performance in class, and one's attitude toward one's English learning experience are considered to be new identified factors that could play a role on how one went about revising one's text. These new found factors not only can be added to the existing known factors that

influence L2 students' revision decisions, but they also remind us that writers do not revise in a vacuum. L2 educators and researchers need to keep identifying all the potential factors in their own specific context so that a fuller understanding of students' revision acts can be developed. Uncovering these potential factors can also help L2 instructors avoid creating learning conditions in which students would be prone to revise superficially.

Although more than 11 interview students perceived and claimed that revision is essential in order to produce a well-articulated paper, only one interview participant mentioned that she would also go through the revision process for her other university course papers. This finding is alarming. In our composition course, I believe that one the purposes of engaging students in process writing instruction is to help them see the value of revision so that they would learn and know how to revise for all the papers they produced. The collected interview data seemed to suggest that a majority of these students only revised for their composition courses and not beyond. A couple of them took a pragmatic approach simply because revision was required for the course. This phenomenon revealed that we might not have done a good job in helping students see the connection between their writing courses and other courses. If student writers do not see the value of revision beyond their writing courses, their investment for the course may be quite limited and superficial.

In my examination of the survey data, I was quite intrigued by the finding that students who claimed to pay only some attention to feedback seemed to pay more attention to mechanical and grammatical related feedback. In the final draft, they would

attend to more organization oriented feedback. Although this finding was also reported in Ferris' study (1995), she did not provide any discussion in her paper. In this study, I attempted to offer some explanations as a potential contribution to this line of research. I suspected that the students who paid only some attention to teacher feedback might lack sufficient knowledge of how to structure the assigned paper, which could potentially influence them to only attend to areas they were capable of improving in the early drafts. As already discussed, some of my interview participants did not know how to tackle content and organization related issues in their drafts and they never received any feedback on these areas either. They would then incline to revise grammar weaknesses which they know how to improve. It might also be possible that these students might perceive that they were very weak in the micro aspects of their papers, like Participant 4 and 6, so they focused their attention early on improving these weaknesses to improve the readability of their papers. Once these issues had been dealt with, they would then attend to areas that they had not paid much attention to in the later drafts. My third speculation was that perhaps these L2 students might also have believed that a good paper consisted of good use of vocabulary knowledge and grammatical knowledge. Therefore, they would be more prone to learn about their mistakes in these areas and to eliminate these errors in the early stages of the assignment.

Moreover, compared to organization and content related feedback, grammar and vocabulary related feedback is usually quite straightforward and easier to respond to as not much interpretation is needed. It is also possible that these students would attend to grammar and vocabulary related feedback because they could easily make sense of it.

For instance, feedback like "what do you mean" demands the recipient to figure out why and which part the instructor did not understand. However, feedback like "vt" often means a verb tense error. As long as the recipient understands the symbol, a correction can easily be made. In fact, all of the interview participants confirmed that they did not face any major difficulty understanding correction symbols about their grammatical errors. Several of them reported that they struggled with deciphering organizational and content related feedback, especially when the feedback was short and cryptic (more discussion on this is provided in page 166).

Finally, Participant 13 certainly pointed out an important point that I sometimes also struggled with; that is, assigning a fair mark between drafts. In my review of L2 revision and feedback studies, I have not come across any researchers particularly discussing the intricacies of assigning marks between although some scholars have advocate providing the marks toward the last draft to avoid de-motivate students during the learning process. Participant 13 felt that since he spent time reworking the drafts, he deserved a higher mark than the original one. From a teacher's perspective (at least from me), I often did not know how much effort students put into their revision when I evaluated their revised drafts, and had nothing to judge from except the quality of the revised written text presented to me. As also mentioned before, what Participant 13 usually did in his revised draft was simply to retype his paper, not much revision on the content that I could identify. Does it count as revision? I personally would not view it as a revision.

Assigning a mark for the multiple-draft essay is a difficult task and I often struggle with whether I should assign a mark based on the improved quality of the writing or I should assign a mark based on how much effort students put into it. I can certainly understand why Participant 13 did not accept his teacher's explanation; that is, the mark is not important. In my review of ESL feedback studies, I have not come across any articles discussing how teachers should assign marks in order to encourage and engage students in meaningful revisions. In the present study, students received a mark in each draft; some interview participants did express that they felt frustrated when they received a lower mark in the revised draft. Future researchers might look into if students would revise differently when the mark is only assigned in the finished product with when the mark is assigned in each draft. If there is no difference, instructors may only need to provide marks in the last draft in order to avoid de-motivating students during the revision process. Such information can certainly help instructors focus on making comments, not worrying about what mark should be assigned.

In the next section, I focus on discussing challenges student encountered with teacher feedback and the resources they had available to mitigate some of the difficulties.

Challenges Students Faced with Teacher Commentary

Survey Data

Revising papers based on teacher commentary involves more than just reading the comments and correcting the mistakes. Prior studies have confirmed that students face numerous challenges in interpreting and incorporating teacher commentary (Cohen, 1987; Biggam, 2010; Ferris, 2003). Questions 16, 18, and 19 were designed to elicit

information regarding challenges students faced in reading and responding to teacher commentary. Question 19 asked students if there were any comments or corrections they did not understand. Four students left the question unanswered. Among the 103 survey participants, 66 students indicated that they understood all the comments and 33 indicated that there were comments or corrections they did not understand. Among eight students who wrote down their own examples of not understanding the comments, the instructor's illegible handwriting (6 participants) was mentioned frequently. While six selection items were provided for the students to choose in Question 18, Question 16 invited students to write down their own examples. In addition, two examples were supplied in Question 16 as sample answers in order to help the respondents recall their own example. These supplied examples are "understand your instructor's handwriting" and "try to figure out what the comments meant". Many students answered Question 16 by selecting either one of the supplied examples or both, instead of writing down their own. Eleven survey participants did not answer Question 16. Among the 103 survey participants, 23 participants indicated that they did not face any challenges reading teacher commentary. As mentioned before, while I strived to use survey participants' own words as closely as possible, when there were statements that seemed to convey the same message, the statement that seemed to best portray the rest of the similar statements would be chosen. For instance, in the category of "Try to find out how to improve the papers based on the comments," survey participants might mean finding ways to fix their mistakes, figuring out ways to improve the papers based on the comments, and correcting their mistakes correctly. In the category of "Try to figure out what the instructors' expectations were",

survey participants might also mean trying to figure what the exact requirement for a particular assigned paper. Table 11 illustrates these challenges students face with teacher written feedback.

Table 11

Challenges Survey Participants Faced When Reading Their Teacher's Comments?

• Understand the instructor's handwriting	• Try to figure out what the instructor's expectations
• Sometimes I do not know what the comments meant	• Try to figure out to make improvement based on the comments provided
• Understand the symbols that my instructor writes	• How to correct the mistakes
• Try to find out what I was expected to do	

For Question 18, I tallied the number of times each option was selected by the survey participants. Participants were allowed to choose more than one item. Five survey participants did not respond to Question 18. While examining my survey data, I realized that I had not included the option of understanding teachers' handwriting as one of the potential challenges students faced when they responded to teacher commentary. As 40 students selected the example of understanding teachers' handwriting as one of the challenges when reading teacher comments, I decided to include that finding in Table 12. If students could not read what teachers wrote on their papers, it was logical to assume that it could impede their efforts to address teacher commentary as they did not know what the teacher wanted them to pay attention to. Although I only examined 14 students' essays, I was quite confident to say that all the composition teachers who taught the

composition courses during the period of my data collection left hand written comments on students' drafts, which made it possible for the challenge of incomprehensible handwriting to exist. Table 12 illustrates the challenges that students reported experiencing with teacher commentary. Not understanding the handwriting (finding derived from Questions 16), not knowing how to revise, and not knowing how to gather information to support one's claim are the top three challenges selected by the participants.

Table 12

Challenges Survey Students Faced with Teacher Commentary

Challenges	Number of Survey Respondents
Do not understand the handwriting	40*
I did not understand the comments	13
I understood the comments but did not know how to revise	44
I understood the comments but did not know how to gather additional information to better support my ideas	51
I did not agree with the comments but felt I had to agree with my teacher's comments in order to receive a good mark	11
My teacher's comments changed my original ideas	17
The comments were too vague so I did not know what to do	16

Note: The number of 40 was derived when participants responded to Question 16

Resources that Students Have to Solve Revision Issues

When students encountered difficulty with teacher commentary, what did they usually do to help alleviate their problems? Survey Question 20 asked the students to write down their own solutions when they did not understand their teacher commentary. As Table 13 illustrated, the survey respondents seemed to have a variety of resources available to help them solve their problems. Nine survey participants did not respond to this question. 44 participants reported that they would approach their instructor for help with comments and corrections that they did not understand; asking friends and others were the second most mentioned resource.

Table 13

Resources Students Utilize When Having Difficulty with Comments

• Ignore the comments (13)	• Access to other resources (5)
• Visit the writing centre (8)	• Delete the incorrect sections (1)
• Ask instructors (44)	• Ask friends/classmates/others for help
• Resolve on one's own (5)	(20)

Note: The number in () refers to the number of participants who mentioned that particular resource.

Thirteen participants indicated that they would tend to ignore the comments if they did not understand what they meant. Among the students I surveyed, only eight students reported that they would seek help from the writing centre. From my interview data, I found that some students did not know of the existence of the writing centre in this university. Other interview participants who knew of the existence of the writing centre admitted that they did not use it often as they normally needed to make an appointment

with the tutor well in advance, which sometimes did not fit their needs. In addition, some students might tend to work on their papers close to the due day, which could make it difficult for them to secure an appointment at the centre. In addition to the above mentioned resources, others that students might use include checking English books, searching on the Internet, and getting assistance from various offices other than the writing centre at MUN.

Comparing to Ferris' findings (1995), new findings derived from this study included ignoring the comments, not making any changes, deleting the incorrect sections and searching the Internet. These were not mentioned among her survey participants. With the fast advancement of technology in the past decades, it is not difficult to understand why the use of the Internet would be mentioned as one of their resources. Perhaps back in 1995, there were not many Internet websites readily available that students could consult with to help solve their writing problems. I was also not surprised to see that my participants also indicated "ignoring the comments" as one of the responses because it was one of the example items provided in the question. However, I was surprised to see "not making changes" and "deleting the incorrect sections" not found among Ferris' survey participants because in my teaching experience, I encountered students who either did not make changes or deleted the problem sections in their subsequent draft. Both my survey participants and interview participants also reported that they would sometimes ignore the comments, keep the text unrevised, or delete the problem section of their written text when they could not fix the problems. My speculation was that how the written work was evaluated might play a role in why Ferris

did not find "not make changes" or "delete the incorrect sections" among her survey participants. Ferris (1995) mentioned in her study that students were informed that "content and rhetorical issues are given greater weight than sentence-level concerns in determining the final grade on an essay" (p. 37). Therefore, it was possible that the students in Ferris' study would be more prone to keep working on content and rhetorical aspects of the text even if they experienced difficulty because these areas were the focus of the evaluation. However, I am not aware we have such a grading policy in place and none of my interview participants and observed instructors mentioned it either. So when my participants encountered more difficult content or rhetorical related revision changes, they might have simply decided not to revise.

In summary, more than half of the survey participants indicated that they understood all of the comments and corrections made in their papers. Challenges students experienced with teacher commentary included not being able to read instructors' handwriting, not knowing what the comments meant, comments being too vague, not knowing how to revise, not knowing how to gather more supporting information, not agreeing with teacher commentary and teachers changing students' ideas. When academic assistance was needed, these students would often seek help from their instructors and from their peers and friends. The students did not seem to utilize the services available at the writing centre as only a small number of students reported that they sought assistance there. In the next section, I present the personal accounts of challenges that my interview participants encountered when they acted upon their teacher commentary.

Challenges Interview Students faced When Responding to Teacher Commentary

During the process of reading and examining the interview transcripts, I grouped my interview participants' similar statements by themes and six themes emerged. Some of the themes share similarities with more than one selection option in the survey (see Table 12). For example, the theme of vague and incomprehensible comments consists of the survey options of comments being vague and not understanding the comments. These six themes include 1) illegible handwriting, 2) vague and incomprehensible comments, 3) lack of knowledge and strategies, 4) appropriation, 5) not having sufficient feedback; and 6) time constraints. Table 14 illustrates these themes derived from the interview data. I integrated Table 12 into Table 14 for a clear review. Some of these challenges I believe are also the reasons why my interview students might submit drafts without any changes or with very superficial changes. I now discuss each of these six themes in detail.

Table 14

*Challenges Interview Participants and Survey Participants
Experience with Teacher Commentary*

Interview Data	Survey Data	
Themes derive from the interview data	Themes derived from the Survey Data	Number of Survey Respondents
Illegible handwriting	Do not understand the handwriting	40*
Vague and incomprehensible comments	I did not understand the comments	13
	The comments were too vague so I did not know what to do	16
Lack of knowledge and strategies	I understood the comments but did not know how to revise	44
	I understood the comments but did not know how to gather additional information to better support my ideas	51
Appropriation	I did not agree with the comments but felt I had to agree with my teacher's comments in order to receive a good mark	11
	My teacher's comments changed my original ideas	17
Having no sufficient feedback		
Time Constraints		

Note: The number of 40 was derived when participants responded to Question 18

Illegible handwriting. Despite the popularity of the computer, none of the interview participants' composition instructors utilized any computer software programs for making comments on students' work. All of the comments left on the collected essays were handwritten. While poor handwriting was identified as a barrier to effectively

respond to teacher commentary among the survey data, 11 interviewees also mentioned that they sometimes could not read what their instructors wrote. I do not know why the course instructors did not use computer software programs to make their comments; this was not one of the interview questions I asked my two interview instructors. I can only speculate that leaving handwritten comments was the easiest way for these instructors. All of these first-year composition courses for ESL students were taught by per-course instructors, but none of these instructors' were assigned a designated computer to use at university. In my own teaching, I often used my own computer to plan my lesson plans. My interview with one instructor also confirmed that she did not have any computer in her office and she used her own person computer for her course handouts.

In the L2 feedback studies, poor handwriting has been identified as one of the factors that impedes student writers from effectively incorporating teacher written commentary in their subsequent revision (Ferris 1995; Lee 2008; McCune, 2004; Zamel 1985). Lee (2008) studied the reactions of two groups of Hong Kong secondary students (one high English proficiency class and one low English proficiency class) to their teacher commentary. She revealed that only 2.8% of the students from the high English proficiency class and 13.6% of the students from the low English proficiency class could totally make sense of their instructors' handwriting. Due to the fact that these teachers in Hong Kong normally had quite a large class size, Lee (2008) speculated that poor handwriting was the result of teachers having to write fast in order to cope with evaluating a large number of student essays. Ferris (1995) surveyed 155 ESL participants taking university ESL writing courses in America. She also found 9% of the participants

complained about experiencing difficulty reading their teacher's written comments. Considering the fact that all the feedback left on my participants' essays was handwritten, I was not surprised to learn that these students also experienced such an issue.

In the present study, not only did the students identify that teachers' illegible handwritten messages could pose a problem, one of the teachers I observed and interviewed also acknowledged that her students might have difficulty reading her handwritten feedback. To mitigate such a potential problem, she often encouraged her students to make an appointment with her, if needed, to ensure that they could read her handwriting. Although most of the interview participants faced such an issue, I found that different students seemed to have different degree of tolerance toward illegible handwritten comments. Some participants, such as Participant 1, would often choose to solve such a problem on their own by guessing what their instructors wrote. The others perceived it as essential to fully understand what the messages were before they began their revision so they had to seek help to remove this potential barrier. Most of these students reported that they would simply approach their instructor right after class when they could not make sense of the handwritten comments.

Two participants I found employed more methods to ensure that they fully understood what the instructors wrote. For instance, Participant 9 perceived that to effectively revise his draft, he needed to first remove any of his confusion about his instructor's handwritten messages because "I want to understand what the teacher needs me to do for my next draft." In addition to asking his teacher to clarify the comments, he would often copy what his teacher wrote adjacent to or above her comments and then

check with his instructor to ensure that he correctly understood the comments. Unlike Participant 9, Participant 1, on several occasions, also re-copy her instructor's comments, but she never went to check with her instructor. The student claimed that "I think I can guess what the teacher said. I just [re]write more clear so I can understand it."

While checking with the instructor or simply guessing what was written would help some students clarify their confusion over poor handwriting, Participant 7 was the most active one to ensure that she not only could fully comprehend the written comments but also had a clear understanding of why these comments were made along with some possible solutions. Getting a clarification directly from her instructor right after the class was often her preferred strategy as she described, "after class, I often asked my instructor to read the comments she made in the drafts, explain to me why I needed to make changes and how I could make these changes." Without fully comprehending the feedback and without knowing any possible resolutions, Participant 7 did not think she could effectively make use of the feedback to improve the quality of her paper. As poor handwriting could impede the student writer in making sense of teacher commentary, vague comments was also found to pose a problem.

Vague and incomprehensible comments. Empirical research has identified that students are often not content and feel frustrated with the feedback "where the improvement they should make was not spelt out clearly…" (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010, p. 282). Such a situation was also identified in the current study. Some interviewees also reported that they found it quite difficult to address comments that were unclear and/or incomprehensible. These students generally held a very negative

view toward such comments. Two types of feedback that my interview participants reported to have trouble with were either short (e.g., be specific) or the comment lacking in information itself (e.g., the sentence is not clear).

When I inquired about difficulties with addressing teacher commentary, Participant 3 initially reported that he did not encounter any problems with his current composition instructor's feedback as most of the comments centred on grammatical issues and the corrections were provided. Examining his written essays, I noted that his writing instructor often provided grammatical related feedback in the early draft and content related feedback in the last draft. In one interview, while we were reading his draft, I asked Participant 3 what his teacher wanted him to do with the comment that stated "what does this sentence mean?" His response was "Umm, I do not know. Actually I really do not know and it is not the first time." Participant 3 explained that he felt that his idea was clearly conveyed in the sentence and he did not really know what he could do to respond to such a comment. He then recalled some of his experiences with the aforementioned feedback when he was still in the ESL program. He pointed out that "Be specific" was another comment that he had difficulty with. According to him, he often obtained such an unclear comment about his essays when he was in the ESL program, but his instructor never discussed (in class) what students needed to do in order to be specific. Participant 3 felt that the instructor just expected him to know how to correct the problem by himself. However, the dilemma Participant 3 faced was that "*the writing instructor* wants me to be specific but I do not know how to be specific." Although Participant 3 reported that he needed to figure out how to address comments

like the one he had described, he also felt that his instructor was partially responsible for such a problem that he had encountered because the instructor also forgot to "be specific" about the message left on his draft. The student attributed such a problem mainly to the influence of his native language and his weak control of English language as he noted, "I understand [my ideas] in Chinese but if I want to translate something to English, it is really hard. So I think if we write something, we cannot translate. We must use English thinking to write an English essay." When asked what he normally would do with such comments, he replied, without any hesitation, that he would either delete his sentences or ignore the comments.

Similar to Participant 3, Participants 1 and 2 also found it problematic to respond to comments simply informing them that their ideas or their sentences were not clear. Participant 1 disliked unclear comments because she found them not helpful at all when she revised. She had this to say, "sometimes I write my points about the original essay [assigned reading], but the teacher said 'this sentence I do not understand' or 'this sentence is wrong' *The writing instructor* just gives us 'you got the wrong point' but did not tell us what is wrong with it." Having also experienced vague comments, Participant 2 reported that she was very annoyed whenever she received vague comments as she explained, "I feel like I put my mind and I wrote it and the idea does not reach you [the instructor] but I understand it." For Participant 2, she felt that what she wrote was very clear to her; otherwise, she would not have written it. The vague comment did not automatically enable her to learn what her teacher viewed as a wrong point in her text. Instead, it created more revision roadblocks.

In addition to facing difficulty with vague comments, this particular student also mentioned that she sometimes had trouble making sense of her teacher's evaluation sheet which informed her the weaknesses by only a cross mark. She found it the most difficult to deal with when the cross mark was left on the quality of structure or the quality of the content. In the evaluation sheet of her third essay assignment, her instructor just used a cross mark to indicate her weaknesses in the introduction and in the organization of paragraphs. There were no written messages left about her introduction on her draft. Although Participant 2 understood that the cross mark meant an area that she needed to refine, she disliked receiving such meaningless feedback.

> R: Do you know that there are weaknesses in these areas?
> P2: Yes. For the conclusion, I know there is a weakness because I did not write any conclusion. But for the quality of introduction, like when you read my introduction, I could not find any mistakes, maybe just referencing. There is nothing, any comments in this one [quality of introduction] and I do not know why there is a weakness.

Since writing an academic paper, in accordance with the norms set in Canada, was fairly new to Participant 2 and she was still learning about the norms here, she felt that such vague comments also caused more confusion. Similarly, one survey participant also had trouble taking full advantage of teacher commentary due to very limited information provided about the student's weakness. The survey participant wrote, "Sometimes I think my introduction already organize well, but instructor's comments said that is not perfect. I do not know how to improve." Reflecting back to my own feedback practices, I became much more aware that many times I had also left comments like these, simply assuming my students would understand. It was evident that without more descriptive information

provided in the comments, the aforementioned participants all found it very difficult to pinpoint exactly what was wrong with their writing. The pedagogical value of feedback seemed to be greatly compromised or even lost when the message was not clear and specific.

Further, throughout my interview sections with Participant 2, it was not difficult to notice that this student held a very negative view toward cryptic comments. As I had mentioned it before, Participant 2 felt extremely overwhelmed by the academic demands she faced in Canada. According to the student, she had managed her college study (taught in English) very well in her country. She had not anticipated that studying in Canada could have been so challenging. She often felt she had to put in more efforts to catch up her study here and she really did not have extra time and energies left for trying to guess what the unclear feedback actually meant. She felt that the unclear message from the instructor seemed to demand students to follow up with teachers. While she fully understood that students had to be responsible for their own learning, Participant 2 expressed that not all the students had time to go to teachers for help. This student felt that effective and useful teacher commentary should be written in a way that receivers could make sense of as well as make use of.

Interestingly, I found many times this student was able to improve the problem area signalled by a cryptic comment. As Participant 2 stated, obtaining a good academic mark for each course was crucial to maintain her scholarship, and "I have to be good in English. Everything is in English at work," she would still try to revise her papers even if the comments were vague. Her strategies to address unclear teacher commentary or

comments that she did not really know how to deal with were to seek assistance directly from her classmates, instead of from her instructor. She preferred to approach her peers as she often found her peers could explain what she needed to do. She reported that in her composition course, she often consulted with one particular classmate who knew how to write well in English. This approach also allowed her to actually see an example of a better piece of writing by reading her friend's essay. She would also visit the tutor at the writing centre for some guidance when she could not obtain the assistance she needed from her peers. However, she would ignore the comments or simply delete the problem section if she really did not know how to make modifications.

While Participant 2 perceived that it was the instructor's sole responsibility to make the written feedback as explicit as possible, Participants 7, 10, and 11 felt that it was their own responsibility to ensure they fully understood her instructor's comments. Similar to the aforementioned students, Participant 11 also did not understand some of her teacher's comments in her essay assignments, such as "watch unity", "be concise", and "watch repetition". However, the student thought highly and was very appreciative about any comments from her instructor by saying, "I think the comments I got are great."

Unlike Participant 2 who preferred to seek help from peers, Participants 7 and 11 expressed the need to have a face to face appointment with their instructors as they perceived it to be essential in order to fully take advantage of written feedback because during the face to face appointment, "we can talk about [the] comments in detail" (Participant 11). She found that her meetings with the instructor in person were very beneficial and fit her revision needs as the teacher could explain in detail what being

concise meant and what steps she could take to make her written passages concise. Without face to face meetings, Participant 11 also admitted that she would have some difficulty figuring out why her text was repetitive as well as why her paragraph was not unified. Unlike the aforementioned participants who experienced difficulty decoding teachers' comments, Participant 12 reported that sometimes she understood each word in the comment, but she still did not know what her instructor actually meant. When she did not really understand the comments that were left on her last draft, she would just quickly look through what her instructor had written and moved on to the next writing task. She often would not do anything about it as revision was not required anymore.

In L2 composition studies, numerous researchers have found that coded feedback can be problematic for student writers as they may not know or may forget what these codes mean during their revision (Brice, 1995; Radecki & Swales 1988; Mahfoodh, 2011). An example of coded feedback is to use the code of "SF" to indicate a sentence fragment error. Several researchers have found that this type of feedback to some extent has pedagogical potential to promote student writers' metacognitive awareness of the errors and to enable students to self correct them (Alghazo, Abdelrahman, & Qbeitah, 2009; Chandler, 2003, Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2003; Hong, 2004). In this study, only one survey participant mentioned facing such a challenge when the writing instructor used codes to signal grammatical errors. None of the interview participants were found to have any difficulty with coded feedback left on their drafts. I offer two possible reasons to explain such a finding. First of all, having difficulty with coded feedback was not a selection option provided in the survey. Thus, it might be possible to assume that some

survey participants might have also experienced such a challenge but did not indicate it because it was not one of the section items. Secondly, as documented in the literature, the instruction of what coded feedback means is necessary to be included in class in order to best capitalize on its effects (Ferris, 2003; Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks & Anderson, 2010). It is my belief that my interview participants did not experience difficulty deciphering coded feedback because their instructors were cognizant of the potential difficulty L2 students would encounter with coded feedback. All of the interviewed students also confirmed that their composition instructors not only supplied a list of what each error code meant but also provided examples of each error code and instruction on how to fix the errors. As a consequence, these participants did not face any difficulty understanding and responding to the coded comments.

Lack of knowledge and revision strategies. Conveying effective feedback is often a very challenging task because even if teachers strive to make their written feedback as clear as possible, an array of other factors might come into play to impede its effectiveness. One of these factors is identified in this study as the lack of task knowledge and revision strategies among students. Saito (1994) has noted that the difficulties student writers face with teacher commentary not only emerge from having difficulties deciphering the feedback but also stem from lacking strategies to address the comments. Some studies have also confirmed that students may know what their weaknesses are but lack revision strategies to effectively revise their work based on teacher feedback (Cohen, 1987; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein, 2004; Mutch, 2003). For instance, Goldstein and Kohls (2002, as cited in Goldstein, 2004) found that

one of their research participants did not make any changes to her citation errors even though the teacher kept pointing out the same errors in each of her drafts. When discussing with the student, the researchers learned that the student was cognizant of the errors but did not know how to fix them properly. Thus, the student writer decided to ignore the comments. In an earlier study, Cohen (1987) conducted a survey with 217 US college students and also found that the participants seemed to know only a limited range of strategies to address their teachers' commentary. In the present study, the top two feedback challenges chosen by the survey participants fell under this category. Although fully comprehending teacher comments, survey respondents did not know how to revise nor how to gather additional information from the external source. A number of interviewees also reported that they did not address their teacher written commentary simply because they did not know how to do so. For example, Participant 1 struggled with writing her summary essay. This particular student felt that she comprehended the reading well, and she believed that she also fully grasped the main ideas of the assigned text. However, she felt that it was really difficult to report the "correct" main ideas that matched her instructor's. Facing such a difficulty, the student was not fond of the instructor's comments, such as "you need to find the main idea" or "you got the wrong idea" on her drafts. Feeling a little bit frustrated toward such comments, the student stated that she understood the teacher's message, but "I do not know how to fix it." She disliked comments that informed her of something she already knew quite well; that is, the purpose of writing a summary is to report main ideas. Throughout my interview with Participant 1 about her summary writing, I found that this student firmly believed that she

had included the accurate main ideas of the assigned reading in her summary assignment. The real problem she perceived was that her interpretation of the main points was different from her instructor's. Although she recognized that her comprehension might be inaccurate, the student stated that the comments she obtained had very little value to guide her to rework her summary because she could not write something if she did not even know what it was. In other words, she did not know how to locate the "right" main points of the reading text. As there was never a discussion about the assigned reading in class, Participant 1 struggled with her summary assignment. Had a brief discussion of the assigned reading been conducted, this participant felt that she would have greatly benefited because such a discussion would have assisted her in revising her summary essay. The only strategy Participant 1 knew of was to reread the assigned text several times. She did not know what else she could do with such an issue. Examining the student's summary essay drafts, I agreed with her instructor that the student did not comprehend the reading text. However, I wondered if repeatedly telling the student that she did not locate the main idea or she had to report the main findings was a sound feedback practice. As the student attempted three times in her summary writing, she never seemed once to grasp the main points.

As mentioned before, Participant 7 often consulted with her instructor when she encountered revision difficulties that she could not solve on her own. She reported that most of the time she could fix her own grammatical mistakes indicated by her instructor. However, sometimes she needed to check with her instructor because she felt that she lacked sufficient grammatical knowledge to effectively solve the problem. Below is an

example of the grammar error that she did not know how to fix without consulting with her instructor. The problem sentence is in italics.

> Participant 7's original text: Based on the data shown in the article "Environmental Implication of Electric Vehicles in China" (Hua, Zhang, Street, He, 2010), the number of Chinese vehicles (550-730 million) is expected to increase 9 times more by 2050 than the number in 2008 (63 million), *which will be 38-83% larger than that in U.S.*. This dramatic rise of vehicle population in China results in the huge imbalance between gasoline demand and oil supplement, and serious environmental pollution.

The instructor marked "RO" (a run-one sentence error) adjacent to the sentence of "which will be 38-83% larger than that in U.S." Even though the student knew the coded error meant a run-on error, she did not think she had made a run-on mistake. After her discussion with her instructor, she was able to revise her sentence but still kept the same sentence pattern she had attempted in the previous draft (see the portion in italics).

> Participant 7's revised text: Based on the data shown in the article "Environmental Implication of Electric Vehicles in China" (Hua, Zhang, Street, He, 2010), the number of Chinese vehicles (550-730 million) is expected to increase 9 times more by 2050 than the number in 2008 (63 million), *which will exacerbate the imbalance between gasoline demand and oil supplement.*

Participant 7 found that such a meeting was essential because she was able to discuss with her instructor what she was intended to do and why she did not think she made a RO error. Having a face to face meeting also enabled her to learn exactly what she did wrong in the sentence and to better understand how to accurately present the complex sentence pattern that she was trying to demonstrate in her writing.

Examining Participant 9's drafts of one particular assignment, I noted that he had not made any changes in the following sentence even though his teacher had circled the

word "is" both on his draft 1 and draft 2. "A few decades ago, it is difficult for us to find decent information on the Internet." It seemed to me to be a fairly easy grammatical mistake, but Participant 9 reported that he did not know how to fix it. So, he decided to omit the word "is" in his final draft as he wrote that "A few years ago, it difficult for us to find decent information on the internet." When we looked at the sentence together, Participant 9 still could not really make changes. The following excerpt demonstrated that Participant 9 was aware of such a problem but did not really know how to fix it.

> R: The very first comment, your teacher circled "is" and in your second draft, you still kept the same thing.
> P9: I think it is a grammar mistake.
> R: You forgot to fix it?
> P9: I know it is a grammar mistake but I am not sure how to fix it.

Further, the student also reported that it was quite difficult for him when the instructor's feedback informed him to draw more evidence from the assigned readings to support his claims. Even though the instructor would sometimes provide him comments with some hints of which text or which paragraph to look at for the information , occasionally he would still find himself not being able to locate relevant information after following the instructions. He often did not know what else he could do to resolve the issue. Rather than consulting with his teacher, he would "just give up" (Participant 9). In fact, Participant 9 is not the only one who expressed difficulty when asked to add additional information to their texts; several other participants also found it quite difficult to effectively respond to feedback that required them to incorporate more external sources in their writing. For instance, Participant 6 indicated that he had difficulty with drawing relevant information from the reading text to support his claim; it was also the challenge

item chosen the most by survey students. Oftentimes, Participant 6 would just ignore such comments. Blaming his weak reading ability as part of the problem, Participant 6 also justified his action by saying that "I wanted to find more information but *the writing instructor* just gave us two materials and I think the content for these two materials is insufficient." The student thought that the assigned reading texts contained a very small amount of information that he could find relevant to his claim, which made him decide to ignore the comment. In the literature, some studies have shown that students experience difficulty providing supports to their claims. For instance, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) reported that L2 students generally found it challenging to address comments that require them to provide additional information to support their claims; the present study lends support to such a claim.

When encountering such a challenge, my participants indicated that they would normally seek assistance from teachers, or peers who possessed a higher level of English proficiency. A small number of them visited the staff in the writing centre for assistance. Their resources for getting assistance to help solve their problems concur with some of the survey data (see Table 13). However, the participants also claimed that they often would just delete the problem section or leave the problem section unmodified when they did not know how to resolve it. Overall, lacking knowledge and strategies to address comments can pose a barrier during one's revision process; feeling one's ideas are being misinterpreted can also minimize student writers' efforts to revise.

Appropriation. As mentioned in the literature review section, potential text appropriation occurs when instructors simply make comments without fully knowing the

actual intentions of students (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982). In the present study, although none of the 14 interviewees mentioned the word "appropriation", some participants expressed the idea that their instructors sometimes did not seem to fully understand their ideas and would just change the students' ideas. However, the change might not match the student's original intention. For instance, Participant 7 mentioned about different teachers treating her ideas differently. As she described,

> When I was in the ESL for the first semester, it is [name of the ESL instructor] who shared the office with [name of another ESL instructor]. Every idea I wrote the writing instructor would think that I had a great idea and it is very different from others. When the writing instructor saw my explanation, the writing instructor would say it should not [be] explain[ed] in such a way. The writing instructor would just keep my topic sentences and then would correct the rest. The instructor would correct all of my information and I was very disappointed about that.

The student then described her experience in the university writing courses. She said,

> However, when I was in Eng 102F and Eng 1020, I am not sure if teachers much respect your ideas or what. The teachers would ask me what I was trying to say and then she/he would help me to write it in English way. I can feel that it is[was] still what I want[ed] to convey but it is[was] written for Canadian people [to understand it easily]. My ESL teacher listened to my idea, but changed a lot of my ideas. For my university courses, I find a lot of teachers pay high respect to my ideas and they helped me to make my ideas better.

Although the student still thought highly of all of her English instructors, it was not difficult to detect her sense of disappointment when she talked about how her so-called great idea were completely transformed into new ones to fit into "English logic." The student reported that she wanted to learn English logic as it was important to know in order to produce a well-written text. She would have much preferred teachers providing

guidance to help her reformulate her thoughts, instead of taking over her learning process. While most of the interviewees followed their instructor's suggestions and made changes, some claimed that they would keep their original ideas in the papers even when their ideas were weak or wrong from their teacher's perspective. For example, Participant 9 had been very keen on addressing his teacher's comments for his first and second essay assignments, but I noted that he revised very little in his third assignment – a research paper on the topic of Wikipedia. He was asked why he made no changes between drafts; one of the reasons he provided was that he did not think his teacher's comments conveyed his original intentions. He felt that how he had structured his research paper made perfect sense. According to him, his intention was to arrange one paragraph discussing advantages of Wikipedia, another paragraph discussing disadvantages of Wikipedia, and the third paragraph discussing possible solutions to mitigate the impact of the disadvantages. In his written text, he provided some disadvantages derived from the reading texts. These disadvantages were that 1) the wikipage that he visited only included certain types of training, which might not be applicable for the general public, 2) problems with missing citations on the site made it difficult for people to determine its credibility. The following text for discussion is taken from the paragraph in which he concentrated on disadvantages.

> The original text: In addition, it is hard to determine the credibility of online information, especially to young people, because they said that sometimes they were not concerned with trustworthiness beyond meeting these requirement[s] of their assignments (Mechen-Trvvino & Hargittai, 2010).

His instructor's comment was that "This does not seem to fit here." Yet, in his revision, Participant 9 still kept the same information in his second draft without making any changes. He stated,

> P9: I think I should keep this information here because in this paragraph, I want to say some negative things about Wikipedia and I think that is the one negative thing about Wikipedia and I think I should keep this information here. But my instructor talked to me that maybe that is not the main point and main thing I should say here. I think that's the way.
> R: Did you talk to the writing instructor?
> P9: Yeah, I talked to *the writing instructor* and I think this information is [the] one negative thing about Wikipedia and in this paragraph, I said all the negative things about Wikipedia and I think I should keep that but she told me that that was a small aspect for the negative thing about Wikipedia. I should find other main points and main negative thing about Wikipedia. In this paragraph, I want to include all the negative things.

I noted that Participant 9 indeed recognized he needed to follow his teacher's comments, but he also felt that he had the right to decide how he wanted to place his ideas in his writing. This particular student showed his sense of ownership of his text as he claimed, "I think if I follow the recommendation from my instructor, I will get a higher mark in the next draft but sometimes I think if my opinion is right, it does not matter whether or not I get a higher mark and I should keep my opinion." Examining his written product, I agreed with the instructor that the example he provided might not seem relevant there. At least, I would not have followed the participant's train of thought without talking to him. Such a finding once again echoes the need of keeping a two-way communication between feedback providers and feedback receivers in order to make feedback effective and useful.

Participant 2 also had a similar experience and decided to leave some of the original texts unrevised as she did not agree with the comment.

Her original text: According to Dempsey, she lived in the school for eight years although she could see her house from the windows of the school and not being able to see her parents except during the summer holiday. She stated that life at school was filthy, food was awful, discipline was strict, diseases were widespread and a lot of physical punishment was happening. *Discipline was strict and all students were forced to hard work in the staff home, chapel, laundry room, and school compound.*

The instructor's comments (see the above portion in italics): This repeats some of what was said in the previous sentence. The teacher also changed "Discipline was strict" to "Students had to obey a strict schedule."

Below is our conversation about how Participant 2 felt about her instructor's feedback.

R: What did she say?
P2: This repeated what I already said.
R: What do you think she wanted you to do?
P2: Just write one line for both and do not repeat key words again.
R: For you these are two different things?
P2: Yeah. Because I am just saying that what Dempsey thinks about the school and here [the student meant the last sentence]I am just giving specific about this plan [from the interview, I got the sense that the student meant that she was trying to provide an example of what happened at school.]
R: Did you discuss with your teacher?
P: Yes, I did. She said like try to be general and to avoid Arabic thing but I also do not know how to write it or how to explain it in words.

Without listening to Participant 2's points of view, I would also agree with the teacher that there was a repetition in her text and I could not follow her thoughts. However, after listening to the participant's points of view, I wondered if there were better ways to help students in this regard. Instead of insisting on students finding another main point, would it be much more beneficial to help students to rephrase these

statements so that they could work them into the paragraph? Instead of finding another idea, students might have just needed to add clarifications or transitions to make their statement work in their text. Below is an example of adding clarifications to make her ideas work in the paragraph. The added clarification section is in italics.

> According to Dempsey, she lived in the school for eight years although she could see her house from the windows of the school and not being able to see her parents except during the summer holiday. She stated that life at school was filthy, food was awful, discipline was strict, diseases were widespread and a lot of physical punishment was happening. *Dempsey then provided a concrete example of what went on in school.* Students had to obey a stick schedule and all students were forced to hard work in the staff home, chapel, laundry room and school compound. (Participant 2's original text with the researcher's modification).

Having insufficient feedback. In the context of multiple-draft writing instruction, students are often required to revise each draft based on teacher commentary. Since the purpose of multiple drafts is to engage student writers in rethinking their ideas, seeking better ways to express their thoughts (Goldstein & Carr, 1996), and taking advantage of numerous opportunities to detect and eliminate surface weaknesses, students usually need guidance along the way regarding what they have done so that they can work on weaker areas. It becomes problematic when student writers obtain only one particular type of feedback about their writing, and it poses a potential barrier for at least some students because they often do not know what to work on in their revision. As discussed before, four participants, in the same composition course, received only grammar related feedback. None of them perceived themselves as good writers in English and they felt that composing in English was quite challenging. They all individually expressed their revision concerns about not knowing what to do with other

aspects of their papers and their needs for other kinds of feedback so that they could improve themselves in these areas. My examination of the written drafts of these students confirmed that most of the written comments centred on grammatical corrections; a few might be on lexical concerns. In addition, most of the corrections were already provided on the drafts. If not, the instructor included a brief message to indicate what kinds of grammatical errors students made. While there was some feedback on the accurate format of APA documentation, no feedback on other aspects of the papers, such as the content and the organization, was provided. Surprisingly, in the very first interview, each of these four participants reported that they were informed that the evaluation of the first draft would be focused on the content and the organization of the essay. In the second draft, much more attention would be allocated to the grammar aspect and all aspects would be evaluated in the final evaluation. The fact that seldom could one find feedback other than grammatical corrections on all drafts showed a disparity between what the instructors told the students about how their papers would be evaluated and what the papers were actually being evaluated on.

Among the four students who only received grammar-related feedback, at least three of them somewhat felt that they also needed to make revision changes in other aspects of their papers since they had to rework the drafts three times. In the first interview, Participant 10 reported that the biggest challenge she faced in English writing was not knowing the exact organization of different essay genres. She reported that "just one score and some corrections of the words and sentences" did not provide her with any information that she could work with to make revision changes in her organization. Other

than relying on her instinct, she did not feel that she could make any meaningful changes or further improvement on the organization. When asked what kind of difficulties she faced in revision, Participant 12 always gave a consistent response; that is, "The teacher did not write an overall comment in my essay so it is hard to revise." As she was still learning to acquire academic literary skills and to figure out the norms, it was understandable that she needed to rely more on her instructor's feedback to show her the disparity between what she knew and what she needed to learn more about. Without this kind of guidance, she was lost and agitated whenever she had to revise.

Participant 14 was also very confused about what revision changes he could make in order to improve his paper. As mentioned earlier, when he revised, he just read his essay again and if he found something weird, he would attempt to fix it. He found reworking his drafts, especially the third time, quite difficult because he often would not find anything weird in his draft on his own. Since he did not really know what to do with his final draft of revision, revising became quite trivia and repetitive. Once, he contacted me and sent me a copy of his third draft for some revision guidance. Most of the written comments were on grammar and the corrections were also provided. In addition, the summative feedback this instructor provided at the end of the second draft was "good" along with a mark of "3.8/5". I also noticed that his teacher did make four non-grammatical comments between draft 1 and draft 2. Below is what his instructor did on the drafts. In the first draft, Participant 14 wrote "Further, some universities steer the waters of copyright legislation on their own." The instructor changed to "some universities are steering the waters of copyright legislation on their own." In the student's

second draft, the student simply recopied the sentence that the teacher corrected. Evaluating the draft for a second time, the teacher underlined "steer the waters" and commented "your phrase?" Another example is that in the first draft, the student wrote "The main reason to cause the case is that universities have misrepresented the shift in fees." The instructor underlined "to cause" and wrote question marks on the top of these two words. In the second draft, the student revised the sentence as "The main reason of the phenomenon is that universities have misrepresented the shift in fees." The instructor's comment in the student's second draft was "what phenomenon?"

After reading his third draft, I noticed one potential problem in his draft. There were many sentences lifted directly from the assigned reading text. In fact, what this student actually did was just to rearrange the order of these sentences into his summary essay. The student never thought that it could be an issue because he reported that he was never told that he could not use the source material directly. In fact, it has been widely discussed in the literature that what proper acknowledgment of sources should consist of may mean quite differently to people with different cultural upbringings (East, 2005; Jia, 2008; Pecorari, 2001; Polio & Shi, 2012; Sowden, 2005; Wette, 2010). For instance, in a society where the concept of communal knowledge or of knowledge as shared is common, proper acknowledgment of sources may not be as emphasized as what we would expect in the west. In addition, Pecocari (2006) and Storch (2009) also suggest that because L2 learners may not receive feedback on incorrect citations from their instructors, these students may simply assume that their citations were correct. They recommend that student writers be given explicit feedback on inappropriate use of

sources. Table 15 illustrates some paragraphs taken from the assigned reading and the second paragraph of this student's summary essay.

Table 15

Selected Paragraphs from the Assigned Reading and Student's Written Work

Selected Paragraphs from the Original Text	**Student's Text**
Established in 1988, the organization offers post-secondary institutions, business, schools and other groups advance permission to copy a variety of works, including books, newspapers and journals. Access Copyright collects royalties when licences are sold to universities and other organization, and subsequently plays the authors, creators and publishers of the works used. The organization's executive director, Maureen Cavan, says **universities have misrepresented the shift in fees**. Access Copyright has applied to the Copyright Board of Canada for a tariff, or required fee, of $45 per student. She [Jennifer Mainland] said the fee proposal was "**the main reason**," but that "there were also other requirements that Access Copyright had in their contract that said **we have to give** them **access to** our **internal documents so that** they **can scrutinize** how we're using copyright materials. "It's just, quite frankly, **none of their business**," she said.	Access Copyright is the organization offering post-secondary institutions, businesses, schools and other groups advance permission to copy a variety of works. The main reason to cause the case is that universities have misrepresented the shift in fees. In addition, universities give Access Copyright access to their internal document so that the organization can scrutinize them, which is none of their business in some universities' opinion.

I advised him to work on rewriting some of his sentences taken directly from the assigned reading with an example showing him how to do so. For example, in his draft, one of the sentences he took directly from the reading was "Universities throughout Canada have opted to leave contracts with Access Copyright, which is a once popular copyright licenser." I showed him an example of how to write the sentence. "The author indicates that many universities in Canada decide not to have any contracts with Access Copyright." I also pointed out the section he misunderstood in the reading and suggested a couple of paragraphs in the text for him to re-read. Participant 14 indeed made many changes in his final draft, used his own sentences and rewrote the section he had misunderstood, and rearranged some of his ideas in his paper. He obtained 3.9/5 in his final draft with the end comment "which draft is this?"

In our follow-up interview, he indicated that he was very disappointed about the final mark. He expressed that when he simply retyped what was corrected in his second draft and changed two words and submitted it back for evaluation, his mark increased from 3.5/5 to 3.8/5. However, in the last draft, he reported that he had spent more time and made more substantial changes. He felt that it was not worth the efforts to just see the 0.1 increase in mark. Since the student submitted all the drafts to the instructor for the final evaluation, we were not sure why the instructor left such a comment without actually hearing the instructor's version of how the paper was evaluated. However, my guess was that Participant 14 made substantial sentence and organization changes in his final draft, which might have taken the instructor by surprise. Overall, having too much feedback might overwhelm students (Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks & Anderson,

2012), but having no feedback can also lead to students encountering revision challenges. In addition, revising one's paper takes time. Not being given sufficient time to rework their papers can also minimize students' revision efforts.

Time constraints. Many scholars and teachers have agreed that providing comments on students' work is time consuming, but deciphering and incorporating teacher feedback into subsequent drafts also takes time. Kietlinska (2006) along with other ESL experts notes that time can play a critical role in the effectiveness of revision among ESL students. In my study, 12 interview participants expressed facing the challenge of short turn-around time between drafts and having limited time between drafts certainly disallowed them to spend sufficient time revising their drafts. When examining the essays of Participant 9, I found he generally seemed to be very keen on revising his work based on his teacher's recommendations. Surprisingly, he revised very little for his third essay assignment – a research paper. While he did not agree with the teacher's suggestions and he experienced some difficulty structuring research paper, lacking time also played a role. For example, one of the comments his teacher provided in his first draft of essay 3 required him to incorporate and discuss some of the findings from one of the assigned articles.

> R: Your teacher wanted you to spend more time on this point
> P 9: I should find more information from this source.
> R: in your second draft, you wrote "Moreover, critics are concerned about the accuracy of Wikipedia, whether "multiple and unpaid editors" can equal professionals, and several nature viewers think that some Wikipedia articles are poorly structured and confusing (Giles, 2005)."
> P9: I kept the same thing because the lack of time.
> R: I noticed you submitted it on July 28. How many days did you have to revise?
> P9: 2 days. I got this paper on Tuesday and I should submit it on Thursday.
> R: Do you understand what she wants you to do?

> P9: Yes, I know how to fix it. I should read the article again and find the evidence from this research and add more information in this paragraph.
> R: But you did not. Why? Any reasons?
> P9: Time. No time.

Participant 9 further mentioned that the English composition course was not the only course he took during the semester. When this particular interview took place, it was close to the end of the semester. Facing fast approaching examinations, the student had been very busy preparing for all of the examinations as well as finishing up with the course assignments of other courses. He felt that having just two days for revision was inadequate for him to revise his drafts properly even though he fully understood the feedback.

> R: What I heard from you is that if today you have one week turn over instead of a couple of days, you would have spent more time to address some of the comments?
> P9: Yeah, you know for this essay, it is the most difficult essay and it is the longest essay I should do in English 1020 so I need more time than other essays and to have sufficient time to address the comments.

Participant 8 who did not share the same writing instructor as Participant 9 also experienced a similar situation. For each of her English essay assignments, she claimed that she generally had two days to revise for each draft. Sometimes she might have a little bit longer if her instructor returned the draft on Wednesday and her following class would be on Monday. She found it unreasonable to expect her to revise her second draft of the research paper in only two days. Eventually, she had to ask for a one-day extension from her composition instructor. Taking five courses in one semester and also having to finish assignments for other courses. Participant 8 felt overwhelmed by the

workload. Like Participant 9, Participant 8 also felt that writing a research paper was the most challenging of all. As she recognized that she did not do well in her in-class draft at all, she wanted to put in more efforts to bring the mark up and having only two days to revise the paper was unreasonable. I found that Participants 8 and 9 did attempt to revise their drafts. However, some other participants might just give up revising and simply retype or even reprint the drafts to meet the deadline, which seemed to lose the purpose of engaging students in multiple drafts of writing and miss the opportunities for revisiting what they wrote. ESL students need time to process and revise. Raimes (2001) has remarked on the importance of allowing ESL students time to develop their competence. Raimes (2001) states, "ESL writers need more of everything: more time, more opportunity to talk, listen, read and write in order to marshal the vocabulary they need to make their own background knowledge accessible to them in their L2" (p. 55). Some of the participants involved did not seem to be given enough time to digest and to utilize the feedback. The pedagogical value of process writing seemed to be demolished when students were being rushed to meet the deadline, instead of having time to reflect on what they had written and think of ways to make it better.

Perhaps because of the time constraints, I found a number of participants were very strategic about how they should manage their academic work loads by prioritizing the tasks. When asked why he did not spend time revising his essay drafts, Participant 4 responded that he had read and understood his teacher's comments, but "I think I should spend more time on other courses and do not have so many time to write a better one" (Participant 4).

R: Why did you spend more time on other courses but not your English course?
P 4: I think there are so many reasons because maybe other assignments are more difficult for me and the requirements are more challenging. I think I can do this very well so I just put it last in my schedule. Another reason is that the mark in every assignment is not that big and maybe one assignment is just 5 marks and that's why I did not, if the time is conflict with other assignment, I will focus on other assignments because other assignment is 20 marks or more.

Similar to Participant 4, Participant 6 also did not revise any content related feedback and he never hid this fact during the interviews. Analyzing his interview transcripts, his personal belief of what the course was about certainly influenced his revision behaviour. I also believed that the evaluation criteria set for this course to some extent influenced his decision on how he would approach his essay assignments as he stated,

You know these 2 essays are 30% of the entire course. Three grammar tests, 15% each and word test 10% and the final 25%. You know the grammar and the word occupy half of the grade of the course and if you get a 50, you can pass the course.

Participant 6 firmly believed that if he performed well on all the tests for the course, he could pass the course easily. In addition, this course which Participant 6 was assigned to take is not a credit course. On the transcript, it would only show if students passed or failed without any marks. Therefore, having a higher mark or just a 50 meant the same from the perspective of Participant 6.

In summary, ESL students involved in this study generally held a quite positive view toward process writing pedagogy. More positive statements were identified than negative ones toward such a teaching approach. Such a positive finding is quite encouraging for teachers who are adopting process writing pedagogy because to make

any pedagogy effective, learners have to believe in the pedagogy that instructors are trying to engage them in. While it is good to learn that students seemed to accept the value of such pedagogy, it is also important to identify their difficulties with revision, the core of process writing. In the study, both groups of students (surveyed and interviewed) reported experiencing numerous challenges when responding to their teacher commentary. These challenges include illegible handwriting, vague and incomprehensible comments, lacking of knowledge and strategies to address comments, students' ideas being changed, not having sufficient feedback, and not having sufficient time to revise. These challenges are also believed to potentially influence students' revision decisions; that is, not to make any revision changes or just to make superficial changes.

Discussion

Teacher commentary is one of the most common forms of feedback on students' learning performance in educational contexts (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) because it often informs learners not only what they have done well but also what they have yet to accomplish. Among all types of feedback, written feedback is the most commonly utilized to provide students with pedagogical guidance and/or scaffolding (Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2002; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Séror 2011). In fact, providing feedback and responding to feedback are two very complex tasks. While teacher feedback is generally believed to be useful to guide students' learning, "the crux of the matter is how students interpret and use feedback" (Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam, 2010, p. 396). My collected data suggested that most students (surveyed and interviewed) seemed

to read and value teacher commentary; however, not all of the students could always make sense of what their instructor left on their essays, which is one of the often cited feedback challenges in the literature (Ferris, 2003; Weaver, 2006). As long as handwritten comments are provided, there is always a danger of students not being able to read them. In class, it is not unusual for instructors to remind students to make their handwriting legible for their assignments and examinations. Equally important, the same expectation should also apply to instructors' feedback practices to better ensure the readability of the written feedback. After all, teacher feedback can only be helpful to students when the intended recipients clearly receive and understand the messages.

One insight derived from the aforementioned finding is that there is a need for instructors who provide written feedback to consider incorporating tools to help mitigate this potential threat. For instance, with the advent of technology, the issue of illegible handwriting can be minimized when instructors consider utilizing software programs, such as Microsoft Word review functionality, to make their comments highly legible. In addition, as electronic files can be easily stored, such a function also allows writing instructors to easily retrieve any student essays as well as common errors of students (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) for planning a class discussion or a revision workshop. Since 2009, I have utilized the Word review functionality to comment on some of my students' work. Although no research has been conducted to see how my students perceived this type of feedback, anecdotal experience has informed me that such an approach allowed me to leave longer messages right next to the problem area than I normally would not be able to do when writing comments directly on the drafts due to the space issue.

Ferris (2003) also advocates instructors to foster a sense of responsibility among students toward their own writing by requiring students to submit a revision response sheet. In the sheet, the student writer is asked to detail how he/she responded to each comment in the feedback and why he/she decided not to make any changes to a particular revision suggestion. Ferris (2003) believes that this sheet can not only enhance students' investment in revising their drafts but also serve as an information sheet for instructors to recognize any differences between the instructor's intention of the feedback and the student's interpretation of the feedback.

Second, providing feedback on student work is a complex task (Yeh & Lo, 2009) and Elbow (1999) has called such a task "a dubious and difficult enterprise" (Elbow, 1999, p. 200). Even if teachers are aware of common feedback issues and strive to make their comments with care, it is still possible that receivers may not understand, may not know how to revise and may feel that their ideas have been misinterpreted and/or disregarded, which are the challenges uncovered in this study. In the current study, my interview students confirmed that most writing instructors went through how they would evaluate the students' work, but very few discussions or training seemed to take place regarding how students should respond to teacher written comments. Reflecting on my own teaching approach, I had also never discussed with my students regarding how to use my feedback in their writing. This finding supports the claim that students have hardly received any training in how to effectively utilize feedback (Weaver, 2006). As decoding and responding to teacher comments is one of the core components of process writing, my findings also highlights that instructors need to enhance students' competency in

responding to teacher feedback and provide clear guidance on how to revise. As illustrated in the study, at least four interview students were found quite perplexed regarding what they were supposed to do in their revision, such as focusing on content-related changes or grammatical-related changes. It is essential that guidance on how to use teacher feedback and how to approach revision tasks be incorporated into the course curriculum (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Ferris, 2003; Mutch, 2003; Weaver, 2006) for process writing composition classes. I believe that if such a discussion or training is not included in the course design, more carefully crafted teacher feedback alone will still be insufficient to help students improve learning. As Mutch (2003) remarks, "well-meaning attempts to engage in conversation with students may founder if students have not been prepared to engage with such comments" (p. 25).

Equally important, to avoid confusing students, instructors may need to be consistent with what they tell the students about how their papers will be evaluated. In the study, four interview participants were informed how each of their essay drafts would be evaluated, but all of them only obtained feedback on the surface features of their text. Although some L2 writing studies have shown evidence that L2 writers welcome and long for error correction feedback (Ferris 1999; Leki 1991; Wang & Wu, 2012), at least 12 out of 14 interview participants in the study want content as well as form feedback. Among these four interview participants who only received grammar feedback, they also voiced their need for feedback on other aspects in the interviews. While some students did not mind too much, all of them could have been better supported to develop and strengthen their writing competency had content and organizational feedback been

supplied, especially when most of them recognized and mentioned that these were the areas that they often did not possess much knowledge about. Thus, they often felt a sense of helplessness when they had to work on these areas alone. It does not seem to be pedagogical fair to expect these students to learn the structure and features of L2 texts without any direct guidance initially.

Analyzing students' written samples and interviewing students, I found that most of my interview participants' instructors utilized handwritten feedback as the sole feedback approach on the students' work although students could always request a meeting during the instructor's office hour whenever they had questions. My own teaching experience and my conversations with two instructors also confirmed that very few students would avail of this service since it was not mandatory for them to meet the instructors during office hours. In my class observations, I also noted that one of the instructors I observed did occasionally utilize peer feedback in her class; however, I found several of the students were actually doing tasks (texting, chatting) other than commenting on their peer's text. It is beyond the scope of the study to determine why the writing instructors only utilized hand written feedback without actually interviewing all the writing instructors who taught during the semesters when the study was conducted. Future researchers may need to include writing instructors in their research designs and to examine their knowledge of feedback practices and feedback approaches.

This line of inquiry is important because it may help better capture the complexity of feedback practices and revision acts. In this study, I did not know why one particular instructor who chose to provide grammar related feedback demonstrated a different

feedback pattern than what the instructor had told the students. Perhaps the instructor thought that the enhancement in grammatical knowledge was exactly what the students needed to improve in their writing. It is also possible that the instructor was not aware that there was a disparity between what he/she thought he/she did and what he/she actually did. No matter what the finding is, each scenario would yield a very different insight for teacher feedback practices. Including teachers' views on their feedback practices can also be useful to inform the educational institutions what particular types of professional development the instructors may need to enhance their competence of feedback practices. If the findings indicate that there are some constraints that disallow instructors to utilize feedback effectively, such as larger class size, different types of intervention may need to be in place to remove the obstacle to enhance teaching and learning.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the main purpose of my study was to focus on showcasing students' perspectives on the investigated topic. If I have had included instructors' perspectives, the data would have helped explain why certain marks were assigned, why certain comments were made, and how students were being evaluated. Although I was only able to include two instructors' voices, most of our conversations centred on resource related issues and their major challenges in class, which could not help answer the aforementioned questions. When recruiting instructors, I was not able to get all the teachers on board. Further researchers will first need to tackle such an issue, how to successfully recruit teachers for the study, in order to help construct a much more complete picture of feedback practices and revision acts.

Reflecting on my own teaching experience, I also often utilized only one type of feedback because it was the only type of feedback practices I knew of. Preparing for and conducting this research, I have become more aware of other types of feedback approaches and their pedagogical potential. For instance, Lunt and Curran (2009) examined the benefits of using audio feedback. They found that such an approach not only eliminated the issue of illegible written messages but also enabled the teacher to provide much more detailed information about their feedback (Lunt & Curran, 2009). They also found that their students were more prone to listen to the audio feedback compared to written messages. To provide effective feedback, writing instructors may need to be open to become familiar with other types of feedback approaches and the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

Conclusion

To sum up, teacher feedback has pedagogical value to facilitate students' learning (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Especially in the context of process writing pedagogy, the provision of written feedback is "the single most important element for successful development in learner's writing" (Storch, 2009, p. 116). However, providing sound teacher feedback is not an easy task. Similarly, incorporating teachers' suggestions into one's writing can also be very challenging. As many students expressed difficulty with making sense of the instructor's handwriting from the survey data as well as the interview data, it is recommended that instructors who often provide written comments consider utilizing other tools to make their messages legible. There also seems to be a need to establish the means in class to train students

how to use feedback effectively as well as to openly discuss how to utilize teacher feedback and what one should do during the revision process. It is also recommended that instructors incorporate various types of feedback approaches to better meet diverse needs, to allow students sufficient time as well as to better support students to become competent in revising their own work.

In the next chapter, I illustrate how these ESL students in the study perceived their first-year writing courses and whether or not these students felt the courses had better prepared them to handle other university writing courses. I also discuss some factors that may have negative impacts on their learning.

Chapter Five

Findings and Discussion

In Chapter Four, I have presented the findings focusing on the participants' perceptions of process writing pedagogy and their challenges with making use of teacher written commentaries in their revision. In this chapter, I attempt to answer the remaining two questions. Specifically, I first focus on depicting how first-year composition courses had helped these undergraduates manage their university writing assignments. I also describe the skills that they had learned as well as those that they had not learned. Finally, I problematize some of the teaching practices and curriculum problems revealed in my data and from my own reflections on my teaching experience. As well, I discuss the impact of the institutional and systemic context on the students' learning.

Students' Perceptions of First-Year Composition Courses

As an instructor of first-year composition courses for L2 students, I was interested in learning what role our writing courses played in assisting these students to manage their university writing assignments. To gain insight on this topic, I asked the participants how they perceived their first-year writing courses and what skills, if any, they had learned to help manage university writing tasks. I also solicited information on skills these students felt they needed to have to adequately handle university writing tasks and the skills they had not learned from these courses. I then compared and contrasted these reported skills to determine if a discrepancy existed between what was taught and what was actually needed. Some researchers have noted that the first-year composition courses

could do very little to help student writers manage university writing (see Leki, 2007) due to the fact that many differences exist between writing in different disciplines (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2007), and it is problematic to expect composition instructors to teach students how to write in these students' disciplines (Speck, 1997). In addition, some other researchers also believe that a specific genre is best learned in its own context (Russell, 1997; Wardle, 2009) because students in each discipline often communicate in a certain way that is unique to that specific major.

In this study, I found that many participants generally perceived their first year composition course to be quite useful and beneficial to help them prepare and handle university writing in a general way, not necessarily specific to the writing requirement in their own disciplines. All of my interview participants reported that their writing experience as well as the types of writing in which they were asked to produce in Canada were very different from those in their previous education training. Therefore, attending the composition course had helped them learn and become aware of some features of academic writing. However, the collected data also suggests that some refinement or modification might be needed in these first- year composition courses to best serve the students and meet their needs.

Perceived Must-Have Skills for University Writing

To better handle the academic demands in higher education, one often needs to develop a set of skills in order to facilitate one's learning and writing processes (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Cleyde & Philpott, 2012). For instance, source-based writing, either from primary or secondary sources, is very common at the tertiary level (Leki &

Carson, 1997; Leki, 2007; Wette, 2010). Student writers transitioning from high school

to university may not have this kind of writing experience prior to entering university

(Barkas, 2011; East, 2008; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Wingate, 2006), which may

potentially make them underprepared for university studies (van Schalkwyk, 2008).

My survey participants were asked to identify perceived essential skills that they

needed to have in order to write adequately for their university study. The top five

perceived must-have skills consisted of language skills, being able to present one's ideas

logically in English, research skills, academic register (e.g., academic vocabulary), and

being able to present one's arguments effectively with relevant evidence. These five

perceived must-have skills were also mentioned by my interview participants, although

not all of the interviewees individually mentioned all these five items. Further, several of

the interview students also mentioned the importance of knowing how to paraphrase well,

but this item is not found in the survey data. None of the survey participants indicated

such a skill, but such a discrepancy might be due to the fact that the skill of paraphrasing

was not a selection item in the survey questionnaire.

Skills That Students Had Learned from Their Composition Courses

As mentioned before, I was interested in learning whether or not and how

our writing courses helped these ESL students manage university writing. My

participants were asked to name the skills that helped them handle their writing

assignments across university programs. Five skill categories were generated after all of

the written statements were analyzed and grouped based on their similarities. These

categories consisted of general academic writing skills, organization skills, source

searching skills, grammar skills and others. Table 16 illustrates the five categories along with their subcategories.

Table 16

Perceived Learned Skills from the Composition Courses

General Academic writing skills
- Summarizing skills (9)
- Paraphrasing skills (14)
- Making Outline skills (1)
- Research paper writing skills (knowledge of research papers and documentation styles) (19)

Organization skills
- Paragraph organization (14)
- Essay organization (42)
- Writing arguments and support thesis statements (4)
- Synthesizing skills (40)

Source searching skills
- Library/Internet search (19)
- Source evaluation skills (8)

Grammar skills
- Run-on sentences (1)
- Punctuation (4)
- Sentence structure (3)

Others
- Academic register (2)
- Using google on-line dictionary (1)
- The skill that can locate main ideas in reading (1)
- Note taking skills (1)

Note: () indicates the number of respondents who made such a response.

How to synthesize information and how to organize essays were found to be the two most commonly reported skills that these student writers felt they had learned. They perceived these two skills to be very useful to help manage their university writing assignments. As mentioned earlier, source-based writing, either from primary or secondary sources, is very common at the tertiary level. Having learned how to use the library search engine and how to evaluate external sources were also reported to be beneficial for at least some students to help handle their other university assignments. In

fact, 12 of the interview participants also individually brought up the usefulness of learning how to search for relevant articles for their assignments. Although they are all very familiar with computers and have experience performing numerous internet searches for personal interests, these participants reported that they had very limited knowledge and experience searching for academic oriented literature. All of the interview participants stated that they never had to search for any external sources to complete their high school writing assignments. Participant 1 claimed that knowing where to look for appropriate articles and how to do so were the most useful pieces of knowledge she had obtained from her composition course that semester. Prior to taking the writing course, she would just use any articles that she found on the topic through a Google search. Participant 1 stated,

> Before I learned the research paper, I would go to the Google and found information. The teacher told us that Google or blog or some webs is not very reliable. You should go to the academic webs to find the information. The teacher told us how to search the useful information.

Ten interview participants reported that through their composition courses, they also learned and became aware of some major distinctions among different types of source articles. They found that this particular knowledge was quite useful for their university study. As their composition instructors had spent time discussing the distinctive differences between scholarly articles and popular articles, these students felt that they became much more cognizant of particular types of articles they would have to use for their university papers. Prior to taking the composition courses, many of them reported that they were not aware of or did not even know there was any difference

between scholarly and popular articles. In fact, it is believed that native English-speaking undergraduates may also have limited knowledge of different types of sources and the differences among each other.

In addition to the skills of searching and evaluating outside sources, learning how to write research papers and how to incorporate external sources into their writing assignments (summarizing, paraphrasing, and citing) were also reported to be beneficial among survey participants. While several of the interview students reported that it was quite useful to learn how to write a research paper, five interview participants (2, 7, 8, 9, and 11) also mentioned the usefulness of learning citation practices from their composition course.

In academia, it is known that numerous different documentation styles exist, such as American Psychological Association (APA) documentation, Modern Language Association Documentation (MLA), and Chicago citation style. Each academic discipline often prefers and requires a particular type of documentation style and these styles may vary tremendously (Dowdey, 1992). For instance, APA is commonly used in social science fields; MLA is often preferred in humanities disciplines. In this study, when the interview participants mentioned about citation practices, I noted that APA style appeared to be the style they were often asked to follow.

The aforementioned five students individually mentioned and felt that many of their professors seemed to assume that students knew what following the APA style meant. They reported that this requirement was often found in their course syllabi without any further information. These students all felt that receiving at least some

guidance about APA in their composition courses helped them utilize it with some ease. Participant 2 reported that among all of her course instructor, only her writing instructor, on several occasions, spent time illustrating the basic format of the documentation style and corrected some of her inaccurate citations in her essays. Because of her writing class, She felt much more comfortable when asked to use the documentation style in her other university writing assignments.

My collected data also revealed that not all interview students received lectures on how the citation practices worked in their writing classes. For instance, four other interview students reported that they were just told to find information from the library or from the Internet about how to cite by their writing instructor. Participant 12 was quite upset when she described one of the experiences she had in her writing course. According to this student, she was first told to use MLA documentation for her synthesis essay by her writing instructor. Without obtaining any direct guidance or lectures on MLA documentation, the student decided to seek help from the writing centre. Her citations were then corrected by the writing instructor and she was told that she used the wrong format. She reported that she personally did not think her writing instructor knew much about citations practices because *"the writing instructor* thinks MLA is just like APA style."

Other examples of how these writing courses had helped these L2 students manage other university writing were obtained from Survey Question 27. Among 77 statements ranging from three words to a paragraph, some statements seemed to suggest the transfer of some learned skills from the writing courses to other university writing

assignments. For instance, learning how to better organize one's assigned English essay,

one's thoughts, and source materials was commonly reported to help one produce a better

paper as the following statements derived from the survey data illustrated,

> "[the writing course] helped organize my own ideas clearly, record [explain] the details more precisely, and yield better essays."
> "It [the writing course] helped to better organize my lab reports and papers."
> "It helped to organize my paper in history."
> "Organization skills help me to finish other course writing assignments quickly and correctly."
> "It tells me how to write an essay in good organization and use vocabulary and improve the grammar. All of them help me write assignments."

Among the interview participants, Participant 7 also described how she had used

the skills learned from her writing courses to help make sense of the reading materials in

other courses. This student stated that it was quite a challenge for her to fully

comprehend readings assigned in her business courses due to numerous unknown words,

unfamiliar terms, and complex sentences. Her initial coping mechanism was to look up

each unknown word, but oftentimes she would still not comprehend the text. However,

she found that she had benefited a lot from attending all of the English courses and she

could see herself making progress due to gaining some essential knowledge about English

texts as she stated,

> This semester [September 2011], when I reviewed, for example, when I read a paragraph in the textbook, especially the paragraph that tries to explain a concept. It [the structure of the paragraph] is like what we did in the synthesis paper in English 1020 and 1021. Every paragraph has a topic sentence and then provides an example or explains first and then gives an example. And the structure is very clear and it is just like academic writing. There are sentences that I need to translate. They are like reporting sentences like [using] indicate. Back then, I did not really get it [a reporting sentence] and now I realize that I did not have to spend too much time figuring out "indicate"; what I needed to do was to understand what was said after indicate.

Through the description of Participant 7, we can see that she seemed to utilize the knowledge she learned about the structure of English writing in her composition courses to help make sense of the assigned university readings. Even though there were still words she did not understand or know, she felt she was much more capable of handling such an issue after the training she had received from her writing courses. Having learned how to better handle unknown words, this student reported that she also does not feel as overwhelmed about unfamiliar vocabulary as she used to.

I also found that a small number of students felt that their composition courses had enabled them to acquire a few study-related skills, which proved to be quite useful when they were working on other writing assignments or examinations. One f the survey students wrote, "I had only one writing assignment (a group paper). I have received 90% and I was doing the revision for the paper." Because L2 student writers in the first-year composition courses at this university were often instructed to engage in multiple-draft revisions, this student seemed to employ what he/she was learning and doing in the writing course to plan his/her group paper, which was rewarded a high mark. Other similar statements, found in the survey data, endorsing the usefulness of the writing course to other courses were "in my linguistic course, I have used the methods and skills I have studied in [the writing] class on the final exam," and "when I write my philosophy essays, it is easy to use the outside source skills."

Interestingly, Participant 3 did not perceive that he had learned much nor that his writing skills had improved at all from attending his non-credit writing course. He did acknowledge that he had learned one very valuable skill from his writing course, which

he believed had helped him better prepare for his final examination of one Business course. Unlike other composition instructors who often distributed pre-selected articles for the assigned essays, his writing instructor always encouraged students to bring in their own textbooks from their own disciplines and write about what they read in the textbooks. This particular instructor felt that it was essential to show the students the connection between the writing course and their other courses so that students could be motivated to learn writing. The instructor (Teacher A) also felt that it was essential for the student writer to read authentic materials and to write about them as she put it, "in university, most of what you write is going to come from the textbook". Although this instructor also provided students with some pre-selected articles for one assigned essay, opportunities for students to pick their own reading materials for their writing assignments were also provided. For instance, the students were asked to pick a chapter in any of their textbooks, read the entire chapter and write a summary of it for their assignment 3. In addition to preparing a summary, students were also tasked to create three possible questions about what they had just read and then use their own words to answer each of the questions. Participant 3 reported that he was quite motivated in doing his essay 3 assignment because the time he spent on this writing task also helped him prepare for his business final examination. He claimed that "actually I do not really like [this business course] because there is too much reading and when I reviewed them, I read 10 minutes and I sleep." However, since he was asked to summarize an article of his own choice, he chose to summarize a chapter in his business textbook. He felt such a task enabled him to retain the information in the textbook better. For Participant 3,

completing his essay 3 was like killing two birds with one stone. He claimed that it was the very first time he saw how his writing course could help him do better in other courses, instead of just learning more grammar and vocabulary. In fact, observing this instructor's class, it benefited me to see how writing instructors might be able to help draw the connection between the writing courses and other university courses, which was something I had never paid much attention to in my previous teaching.

Further, since all of my research participants are ESL learners, all the interview students along with eight survey participants claimed that taking the composition courses seemed to strengthen their linguistic knowledge and competency. For instance, "it improved my grammar," "it helps me make less mistakes," and "it tells me how to use right vocabulary and improve grammar." Although Participants 10, 12, 13, and 14 did not find that they had learned much about writing from the composition course during that particular semester when the study took place, they all mentioned that the course had strengthened their grammatical knowledge. They individually reported that they finally knew how to accurately apply some particular grammatical rules in their writing, especially the use of the present perfect tense. According to these participants, they had also learned about English grammatical rules in China, but they never really quite understood them nor had the opportunities to apply them in real life, except when taking an exam. As their first-year composition instructor had spent quite some time explaining the use of present perfect tense and had also demonstrated how they could utilize this tense in their summary writing as well as in their synthesis writing, these students felt that they were much more confident using it in writing.

Overall, a substantial number of students, especially those whose discipline required more papers, appeared to feel much more confident and at ease for handling university writing assignments perhaps because they felt that they had acquired some knowledge about general academic writing and because they felt their English linguistic ability had improved. The following responses illustrated some benefits for attending these composition courses.

"I know how to write better than before."
"I can do better in other courses' assignments."
"In my engineering 1040 course, I need to write a lot of reports. I feel more comfortable to write."

Skills that Students Wished They Had Learned

In this study, the research participants were also asked to identify skills that they felt were needed but were not taught in their writing courses. Such information is useful because it can provide valuable insight into the potential gap between what is taught and what is actually needed. Table 17 illustrates all the skills that survey respondents wished they had learned from the writing course but did not feel they had learned.

Table 17

Skills that Students Wished They Had Learned from the Composition Courses

General Academic writing skills	**Source writing skills**
• Paraphrasing correctly (3)	• Organizing sources (8)
• Summarizing the assigned articles (1)	• Selecting relevant sources (24)
• Citation skills (3)	**Organization Skills**
• Writing techniques (7)	• Essay organization (2)
English knowledge	**Other writing genres**
• Grammar (5)	• Learn various types of writing genres (17)
• Academic register (3)	

I obtained 73 survey responses. Knowing exactly how to select relevant sources for the assigned writing and learning different types of writing genres were mentioned most among all of the written responses. Seventeen survey respondents out of 73 survey participants wished to learn more variety of written genres, such as lab reports and proposals. The fact that very few students indicated the need to learn about general academic writing skills in this section seemed to indicate that the first-year composition courses had provided these students with guidance in this area. My interview participants also mentioned some of the skills that were identified in the survey data; however, five of the students mentioned that they wished they had learned about how to plan and organize a long paper, which was also echoed by a couple of survey participants. In addition, some of the interview participants wanted to know exactly how to organize their essays.

Searching and identifying relevant sources. Close to one third of the survey students who responded wished to have learned how to search external sources as well as

how to pinpoint what to cite among various sources. Initially, this finding appeared to contradict to my interview data because almost most of my interview participants (except two students) mentioned about learning how to use the library search engines from their composition courses. After examining the writing courses that students with such a need were enrolled in, I noted that more than half of these students were from the non-credit bearing composition course. Since students in credit-bearing composition courses often had at least one section of the library tour that provided some information on how to use the library system to search external sources, but not the students in the non-credit bearing one, this might have explained why more students from the lower-level English course indicated this need.

In this university, it is not unusual to find that students who are assigned in the lower-level writing course are tasked to write research reports or papers in their other university courses. For example, Participant 3 was in the non-credit bearing writing course and in the same semester, all of his other university courses required him to submit either a group paper or an individual paper, in which he had to include some external sources. In one of his discipline courses, he was required to submit 3 ten-page project based papers which required him to demonstrate his personal ideas as well as some empirical evidence. Although Participant 7 did not voice the need to learn how to search academic sources, she also reported having a similar experience like that one that Participant 3 had; that is, being tasked with something that they may have quite limited knowledge of or experience with. When Participant 7 was in English 102F in the previous semester, she was asked to produce a full proposal for one of her business

courses. According to Participant 7, although her business instructor went through some basic guidelines, she felt it was extremely challenging to handle the writing in that course because she found herself lacking some essential research writing knowledge and skills, such as what should be included in the literature and how to utilize the APA style. This phenomena that students in the non-credit bearing composition courses would still be tasked to write research based papers in other courses might have explained why more students from the lower-level English courses voiced such a need. It might have better served the needs of ESL student writers if library instruction and some source writing as well as source searching techniques could have been incorporated into all of the three composition courses.

Although all the students in these three composition courses were engaged in source writing tasks, the fact that a significant number of students wished to know how to find external sources and learn what to cite for their assigned writing might also point out one of the limitations that the existing writing courses have; that is, students might be given very limited opportunities for finding external sources themselves and/or limited guidance and practice for how to pinpoint relevant sources. In these first-year composition courses, student writers are often engaged in writing controlled essays; that is, the instructor assigns an arbitrary topic and provides pre-screened reading texts. Sometimes, a clear writing prompt is also provided, such as discussing the advantages and disadvantages of electric vehicles. Several interview participants indicated that they often had no trouble pinpointing relevant information from the assigned texts as long as they could comprehend the articles. For instance, Participant 8 was able to successfully

draw useful information from the assigned readings for her first two essay assignments because the articles were closely related to the prompt. As the student stated, "The teacher gave us the articles and asked us to write about [them]. The articles are related to *the writing instructor's* prompt." However, when relevant articles were not provided and no prompt was supplied, Participant 8 found it extremely difficult to manage her third assignment (a research paper) because "for this one [research paper], I do not know what I need to write without a clear direction and I also need to find the articles myself."

I also noted that although students might be quite skilful in locating and gathering external sources, Participants 1, 9, 11 and 13 faced the challenge of deciding which external source was useful and relevant for their paper. As Participant 11 put it, finding six articles for her composition course assignment was easy, but "figuring it out which one is good for me to reference is not that easy." Participant 9 found it challenging to identify connections among his external readings and synthesize information as he stated, "How to combine together, I do not and actually I do not know it clearly and that is the difficult point for me." Participant 13 also had a similar experience. In his political science course, he was asked to write a 10-page political paper. Although a range of pre-assigned topics was provided for him to choose from, he had to clearly indicate his own position on the chosen topic, collect relevant external sources, and incorporate the sources logically to support his claim in the assigned research paper. There was no further guided direction or prompts about the assigned topics like the one that students would often obtain from the composition course. Having no difficulty locating abundant external sources, Participant 13 was not able to work out a clear argument and to identify relevant

evidence to support his argument on his own. The course instructor's feedback wanted him to "ensure all your evidence is relevant to your argument. You spend too much time defining your concept." After examining this political science writing assignment, I found what the student tried to do was to put as much information from the external sources as possible into the paper but he never really stated his position. When we talked about his challenge for this particular paper, he responded, "It is hard for me to find the right material and how to make the good connection between the idea I want to express and the material. I have never done this before and it is hard for me to get a concept about it." However, the same student reported that he never once experienced such a difficulty in his composition course. He felt that he was quite capable of drawing relevant information for the essays assigned in his composition course partly because there was a prompt provided and partly because his writing instructor did not seem to have any issues with his content.

Knowing how to write various types of essays. In addition to the skills of identifying relevant information for school papers, another one third of the students wished to receive discipline-specific instruction in their composition courses, instead of just general essay writing. These students indicated that they wanted to learn how to write technical reports, lab reports, research proposals, and business letters and memos. As these first year writing courses were not designed to teach discipline specific writing genres, it was not a surprise to see research participants mention such a need.

Knowing how to plan and organize a long paper. Five interviewees mentioned that being tasked to write a long paper for their other university courses was very

challenging and they wished they could have these practices in their composition courses. Among these composition courses, all of the students were normally engaged in practicing writing essays that ranged from 100 to 750 words, noting that the research paper assigned in two credit bearing English courses would be slightly longer. However, it may not be unusual to find that students would be asked to produce a 10-page paper for other university courses. Some interviewees found it extremely difficult to come up with enough content as well as to write their thoughts in an organized and logical way for a long paper. As Participant 13 put it,

> sometimes I kind of know what I am going to say but sometimes it is hard for me to get maybe 2000 or 5000 words to express this kind of opinion. And for me, 100 words is enough to explain that and I kind of have to have a lot of materials to make it rich but sometimes if I want to make it rich, and I have to get a lot of materials and with a lot of materials, I get confused and make the whole essay wobbly[weak].

Participant 3 faced a lot of difficulty in one of his discipline courses which required him to produce three 10-page papers. Although he knew how to structure a short paper, he felt helpless in organizing a long paper. He stated,

> I do not have any real organization about it. I do not know how I can write this. Because in the ESL and this writing course, the teachers just trained us about the five-paragraph essay, but I never think I can write a 10-page paper. It is really crazy. I do not know.

In addition, several of my interview participants felt that it was easy to write an informative paper, but it was not easy when they had to make a clear argument in their paper. As Participant 8 described, "[for my research paper], there is only one word for the topic 'nutrition'. And we need to narrow down our topic and make the argument by

ourselves, which is a little bit hard for me." I also suspected that students who felt challenged completing a long paper might not have allocated their time well for planning such a writing task. They might tend to do the paper toward the due date, and thus became overwhelmed by the workload and time pressure. Participants 3 and 13 both admitted that they often worked on their paper very close to the due date. Participant 13 somehow felt it was also the instructor's responsibility to remind students to work on the paper. He stated that he did not plan his long paper well ahead of the time because the instructor just assigned the paper in the beginning of the semester but never reminded them to work on the paper toward the due date.

Discussion

In this study, the data collected suggested that these ESL participants generally found their first-year composition courses beneficial in strengthening their linguistic competence and useful in assisting them managing their university writing assignments. In Leki and Carson's 1997 study, a similar finding was also identified. Their ESL participants also found their ESL writing courses useful to reinforce their English ability and some skills acquired in the writing courses were proven to be useful in managing other courses. Most of Leki and Carson's participants found writing for their discipline courses challenging because they were expected to demonstrate their understanding of the content for the discipline course writing. When they wrote for the ESL composition course, these students felt that the assigned reading was just for helping them generate ideas ,and fully comprehending the text was not expected. The challenge that Leki and Carson's participants experienced was not found in the current study. Instead, my

participants found it quite challenging to manage when they were tasked to write a long paper. As a writing instructor, I was quite pleased to learn that our composition courses seemed to play a positive role in these students' university study.

The collected data also suggested that a substantial number of the students seemed to receive guidance, although the degree of guidance provided in each composition course may vary, on how to structure academic essays and what the general writing expectations were in Canada. Through the in-depth interviews, I noted that more than half of the interview participants wished for more explicit instruction on how to organize their assigned writing tasks prior to the assignments and on the standard textual practices expected in university. Four interview students indicated that their composition instructor just told them to find information from the library or from the Internet about how to cite without any class lecture on the documentation style in English. These students found it difficult to complete a task without some background knowledge. In fact, their need for more explicit instruction in these areas is not difficult to understand when we apply Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Since these students are generally not accustomed to English writing compared to their Canadian peers and are acquiring the writing expectations set in the west, it is understandable that they crave more explicit instruction and need more initial scaffolding. The finding that students wanted to have more direct guidance on structuring their essays and on documentation styles also parallels with the finding of previous studies that ESL writers in higher education usually experience difficulty with and encounter uncertainty about how assigned writing tasks

should be organized (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Dong, 1998; Lee & Tajino, 2009; Thompson, 1999), and how to properly cite (Shi, 2004; Wette, 2010).

Lillis & Turner (2001) have contended that the source of some writing problems faced by the student writer in higher education also stems from the phenomenon that the academic tends to view writing conventions and expectations "as if they were 'common sense'" (p. 58) and these conventions were often "communicated through wordings as if these were transparently meaningful" (p. 58). As mentioned before, APA documentation or other citation style was often required in their papers, but little information about what the documentation was seemed to be provided in most of their courses. In the previous chapter, the collected data has revealed that some of the participants grappled with decoding instructors' unclear comments, such as "be specific", "avoid repetition", and "you have the wrong idea", and these students reported that they were seldom guided to learn how to be specific or what constituted repetition. Some instructors seemed to assume that when students obtained these messages, the students automatically knew what was in their instructor's mind and knew how to tackle their weaknesses. Perhaps it is this assumption of transparency that has caused confusion and anxiety among the student writers, especially the novice ones, when they interpret their instructor's comments and when they are expected to demonstrate their scholarly skills in the writing.

Interview Participants 2 and 12 certainly disliked the fact that they had to go through a period of uncertainty regarding what they were supposed to do for the requested documentation style as well as structuring synthesis essays. Such a finding reminds instructors, especially nowadays when a diverse student population is common, to be

mindful about diversity in the classroom and to make more explicit explanations about the writing assignments and the requirements when teaching ESL students. Although it has been discussed in the literature that tacit knowledge, such as how a well-written paper should be structured, is difficult to verbalize, not to mention to teach explicitly (see Elton 2010), this should not stop instructors from making an effort to make the writing expectations clear to these students. One suggestion would be to provide samples of exemplary writing as well as to guide the students to analyze the scholarly articles to raise their awareness. Future researchers or instructors may also be interested in exploring what kinds of classroom activities can be done to make the tacit knowledge more clearly to the students, in addition to providing sample writing or exemplars.

Second, some previous studies have found that students experience difficulty in selecting relevant information from numerous external source materials for their won papers (Bacha, 2002; Krause, 2001). A similar finding is also identified in this study; some interview students, experienced great difficulty pinpointing relevant information in the articles they chose themselves for their assigned essays. This appears to suggest that providing pre-screened articles in the composition courses might not be sufficient to prepare these students for the writing tasks they would face in the university. At university, it is not uncommon to see that students have to define their own topic, search external source articles, come up with an argument, and determine which information in which article is useful for university assignments. Searching, sifting, and pinpointing useful sources can be quite challenging (Wette, 2010). Such skills are crucial for university studies as Polio and Shi (2011) remark, "the ability to incorporate outside texts

into one's own writing is an essential academic skill (p. 95). As illustrated earlier, Participants 8, and 13 did not experience much difficulty with most of their essay assignments in the composition courses perhaps because they were provided with a clear writing direction with relevant external sources. When they had to locate their own articles and pinpoint the useful information on their own without any prompts, such as their writing assignment 3, they experienced great difficulty. They did not feel that they could handle these tasks well. In addition, some of them were given limited time to work on their most complex assignment, research papers. To better help facilitate the writing development of L2 students, first-year composition instructors may need to consider adding class discussions on how to identify useful outside texts for one's essay and assigning the research paper assignment earlier in the writing class. Allowing students to actually go through the process of identifying and selecting relevant information themselves with ample practices and on-going discussion of the challenges students encounter may better serve the actual needs of these students. By doing so, these students may be better prepared for the writing assignments outside of their composition courses.

Third, the fact that Participant 3 with a very negative view toward most of his ESL training suddenly appeared to be quite interested in doing his third essay assignment when he saw how his training in the composition course could help him manage his other university courses is intriguing. This finding may suggest that helping ESL students see the connection between their writing course and their other courses could motivate students to invest effort in the composition course. Although teaching writing conventions and providing students with tools and strategies are one of the goals of ESL

composition courses, writing instructors and researchers need to continue looking for learning incentive like this to encourage learning.

Finally, in my own teaching practice, I often told my students how important it was to learn to write adequately in university because they would be engaged in many writing tasks beyond the composition course. I was quite surprised to find how little most of the interview students actually did in terms of writing individual papers for their other courses. In fact, I learned that if there were any writing tasks assigned in their university courses, most of them were often group-based projects. Leki (2007) documented how four undergraduate students learned to acquire their academic literacy in her book entitled, *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and Complexities of Academic Literacy Development.* She was also surprised to learn that her participants did not do as much writing in their university study as she had assumed. This finding is important for any composition instructors teaching ESL students for two reasons. First, such a finding suggests that there is a need for composition instructors to get a better sense of what kind of writing is actually required outside the composition course. By doing so, writing instructors can avoid telling students a learning reality that may bear very little resemblance to what they will actually experience.

Also, I am well aware that my sample is quite small and many of the students were recruited from the Business Faculty so any insight drawn from the study may not be suitable to apply students who are from other disciplines. Nevertheless, this finding that many of my interview participants were assigned group papers has prompted me to ponder why we had not addressed the topic of working on the group papers in the

composition course. One explanation might be that writing instructors had been concentrating on strengthening each student's competency in producing individual papers. In my interviews with the student participants, I found that many of them, apart from Participant 7, seldom contributed to their group papers. Several of them reported that for group papers, they would just write a paragraph and submit it to their Canadian peers because these students believed their Canadian peers knew how to write well. Participant 9 stated, "I just wrote something and you know that sometimes I have grammar mistakes and I sent the document to them and they helped me fix my mistakes and then they combined my ideas and their ideas and after that, they submitted the paper." However, it is not uncommon to find in the literature that many university students, native and non native speakers, faced writing problems. These ESL students appeared to lack confidence in themselves in producing a good paper when working in a group. To better empower these ESL students, composition instructors may consider adding the component of working on group papers into the first year writing curriculum so that students have a chance to learn how to actively interact with others and how to capitalize on the benefits of group work. Students may also need to be informed that they are not the only group of students who find writing challenging in the university setting. Knowing that native speakers also find it challenging may increase ESL students' confidence in writing.

In summary, a majority of the student participants found their first year writing courses useful to help them manage writing tasks assigned in their other university courses. Although the composition instructors generally seemed to guide the students to

learn how to organize an academic essay as well as how to synthesize various information, some students also felt that their English ability had improved and that they were able to write with much more confidence. As writing based on other texts is quite common in tertiary education, a substantial number of students in the study expressed their desire to learn more in-depth knowledge about how to locate external sources. They also wanted to learn exactly how to determine and select relevant information among multiple external sources. Wishing to learn some discipline specific writing genres in the writing courses and wishing to learn how to plan and organize a long paper were also voiced by some participants.

Potential Constraints

As mentioned in Chapter One, it is now difficult to find a single university that does not engage in some sort of internationalization activities. As a result, a much more diversified student population is ubiquitous in most Canadian university campuses. Almost all of my interview students chose Canada to further their education because they believe that English language has its global currency. Obtaining a foreign credential and communicating well in English would certainly be a bonus when they seek a career back home. Even Participant 3 who had very little interest in studies was also sent to this English-speaking country because his parents appeared to share the same belief. For these L2 students, they faced the obvious linguistic challenges studying in an L2 learning environment as well as numerous other challenges when they deciphered their instructors' written comments and when they attempted to incorporate these comments in their revision. I now discuss four teaching and curriculum problems and one institutional

constraint. These problems and constraints may have the potential to negatively affect these student writers' learning. The teaching and curriculum issues consist of 1) Unaddressed essential teaching components, 2) allowance of limited revision time between drafts, 3) divorce of reading from the composition courses, and 4) ill planned first-year writing curriculum. Limited investment to support ESL students' needs is considered an intuitional constraint.

Unaddressed Essential Teaching Components

In the multiple-draft writing classroom, reworking the drafts is often essential and expected. Knowing how and what to revise becomes very important; especially the quality of these students' written texts was often evaluated on the quality of each revision. I found that revision, the core of process-oriented pedagogy, appeared to be hardly discussed in these first year composition courses. Neither of the two instructors I observed allocated any class time to addressing questions, such as why revision was important, how one could rework one's written work, or what one could do when encountering difficulties during the revising process. All of the interview participants also reported that they could not recall any class lectures focusing on discussing why revision was necessary or instructing revision strategies. Reflecting on my own teaching practices, I have also become much more aware of the fact that I, too, did not pay much attention to revision in any of my lesson plans. I just assumed that revision problems, if any, started from the students.

When I embarked on this study, I also carried such an attitude. The topic of revision and what we could do to engage students in their revision process never came up

in my interview with the two observed instructors, not to mention discussing why we did not address revision in class. However, the focal point of my conversations with the fourteen student participants was revision. Participant 12's statement that "I do have some trouble with writing revision because I do not know I should just correct the mistakes or you know just like the organization be better or add some new ideas or change some sentences…" painted a picture of the confusing and helpless learning context we seemed to unintentionally set up for these students. As also discussed in the previous chapter, some students in the study grappled with decoding instructors' unclear comments, such as "be specific", "avoid repetition", and "you have the wrong idea". Little guidance or information was provided to make these terms clear to the students, but they were expected to revise their texts based on these statements. All these incidents seemed to suggest that some of these unreflective teaching practices had set up a series of potential learning impediments for these students.

Allowance of Limited Time between Drafts

In the study, the interview participants were found to be given quite limited time to revise their drafts, at least for some essay assignments if not all. Writing up this dissertation and revising numerous drafts along the way, I have to admit revising is not as easy as simply addressing the comments left on one's written work. Revising sometimes can be very time-consuming and cannot be rushed. A short turn around time seems to potentially restrict students in rethinking their work and coming up with better ways to express their ideas. To meet the deadline, students might just rush to complete their assignments or revise at the superficial level, a loss of the pedagogical value of engaging

students in the multiple-draft writing. There appears to be a need for writing instructors to consider allocating a longer turn around time between drafts, especially for research paper assignments so that students are not being rushed to revise for the sake of revision. During my interviews with participants, several of the students reported that they did not address their teacher comments because they did not have sufficient time. They claimed that they would have invested more efforts and done a better job had they been given a longer time. It is beyond the scope of the current study to determine if a longer turn around time would indeed help students yield a better refined paper. A two-day revision allowance between their research paper drafts seemed to be too short and discouraged revision efforts, especially when a number of the students had experienced great difficulty with the assignment already, such as not being able to pinpoint relevant sources. Future researchers may be interested in exploring if there is a difference between writing quality when students have a longer period of time to revise their drafts. Studies that look into how much time is considered adequate for L2 students to properly revise can also be beneficial for process writing instructors, especially when they try to engage their students in meaningful revisions.

Further, revising can be a very frustrating and boring process and yet the instructors in the study seemed to have done little to entice students to revise. For instance, among these first-year writing courses, the first two essay assignments are usually worth 15% each; each draft in each essay assignment is worth one third of 15%. Several interview students, like Participant 4 and 6 as discussed in Chapter Four, felt that they could only obtain a marginal increase in marks between drafts after revision and

such a marginal increase might not be worth their efforts. They would rather spend more time in other courses that would grant more marks. Participant 8 did not spend much time in revising her final draft as she claimed that no matter what efforts one put in for the third draft, her instructor had the tendency to give most students 80% for the final draft. In fact, two students from that particular instructors' class always had 80% on their final papers. These two findings are considered new insights to the field of teacher feedback and student responses as I have not come across any previous studies that discussed such findings. These findings also signal that teacher feedback practices and student reactions are context-bound activities. In other words, students who are situated in a different setting and different writing context may have different reactions and face different challenges. Future researchers or classroom instructors should continue conducting feedback studies in their own teaching context to expand our knowledge base of all the potential factors that may impede the effectiveness of our feedback practices or discourage students from utilizing our feedback. If enabling students to become good revisers is one of the writing course goals, the composition instructor may need to consider adding in more incentives to better encourage students to engage in the revision process.

Divorce of Reading from the Composition Course

It is common knowledge that academic writing in the post secondary context often involves reading. In fact, I noted that developing skills in critical reading is also one of the main course objectives of English 1021. My collected data suggested that reading has been seldom addressed in these first year writing courses. None of the study

participants mentioned that they had learned reading skills or they had learned how to read critically from the course. Commenting on the existing writing curriculum, Teacher A stated,

> I think the university whoever is in charge of this has more of an idea that this is a writing course and not necessary making all the connections between reading and writing, but I feel that the four skills had to be integrated and especially in the academics, we have to look at reading and writing. Because in university, most of what you write is going to come from you got to read and you got to read and write and two are intertwiningly link all the time.

Were the students in these writing courses competent readers? Some, in fact, were apparently quite weak in reading because one of the teaching challenges that Teacher B often experienced was students' weak reading ability. She commented,

> I think that sometimes some people [students] are not at the level, and do not have the language skill either. I think they may not understand their reading a lot of time and then they read things very superficially so they cannot capture the nuances in their writing. I do not know how much they comprehend. I wonder sometimes what they understand.

When I interviewed my 14 participants, all of them confirmed that assigned readings were never discussed in class nor was any guidance on how to better understand their reading texts provided. Several of them also reported that they faced a certain degree of difficulty with comprehending reading assignments, which somehow impeded them from writing well. For instance, participant 7 talked about her difficulty trying to comprehend the assigned reading for essay 2. Participant 7 stated, "It was hard to comprehend the assigned readings about engineering foods. I also checked the information in Wikipedia and felt that the information on the website is easier to understand than the article assigned."

Participant 6, on several occasions, did not respond to any of his teacher's comments on his content issues. Although his perception of the function of his writing course influenced this student to invest very limited efforts in the course, the student also reported that he decided to ignore the content issues because he had difficulty fully grasping the reading. One consequence of not comprehending the text was that he would not be able to locate the relevant information. Some researchers have perceived that reading plays an important role in writing (Carson & Leki, 1993; Dryer & Nel, 2003; Hirvela, 2001) and Dryer and Nel (2003) indicate that the ability to comprehend university texts is one of the essential skills L2 students need to possess. As students are often expected to write based on external sources at this level of education, it is a necessity that students must understand what they are reading before they engage in writing. The finding that students experience difficulty with comprehending their readings seems to suggest that composition instructors and curriculum developers need to consider incorporating some reading components into the composition course to better support L2 students at the tertiary level.

Ill-Planned First-Year Writing Curriculum

Speaking with my two observed instructors and reflecting on my own teaching experience, I felt that there seemed to be no clearly defined writing curriculum plans for each of these three writing courses regarding what types of essays should be taught and what main skills should be emphasized for each class to better facilitate the writing development of these students. Assigned course instructors are often left on their own to decide what their course should focus on. One consequence of such an attitude toward

the writing curriculum is that inconsistencies may exist across sections of the same course, which may not work for the students' best interest. For instance, comparing my interview participants' essay assignments, I noticed that in one section of English 102F, students were engaged in short summary writing, blog writing, and exam-based question and answer writing. In the other section of English 102F, students were assigned to do synthesis writing and one take-home summary writing, which were two of three essay assignments students would normally engage in learning and writing for English 1020.

In addition to curricula that were not clearly defined, little information seems to be offered about the nature of the course when a per-course instructor is assigned for the course. I did not find myself obtaining much information about the nature of the course when I was first hired to teach English 102F; two instructors whom I interviewed also confirmed that they did not get much support from the department either. Since little information seemed to make available to the assigned teachers, one instructor reported that she simply followed another instructor's course plan when she was hired; the other simply planned her courses based on what she thought would work best for the students. Since there is no ESL faculty member residing in the department, ESL per course instructors are often referred to contact the Director of the ESL division for assistance. This particular director already has to manage many administrative duties as well as manage a growing ESL division, being able to provide timely assistance can be problematic and unrealistic.

Up to now, I have discussed four unfavourable factors that I have observed to exist in our teaching practices and curriculum. These may have caused some of the

challenges that students in the study had experienced in their learning. The final factor, limited investment for the academic support of ESL students, is believed to be the institutional and systemic constraint that might be the root for most of the problems discussed above.

Limited Investment for the Academic Support of ESL Students

In recent years, recruiting international students has been a top priority of this university partly due to its shrinking pool of eligible domestic students for university, especially in its own province (MUN's Strategic plan, 2007). As well, the university itself is also committed to its provincial government goal; that is, to attract and retain foreign talents in this province (MUN's Strategic Plan, 2007). My collected data suggested that the investment in providing academic support for international students has been so far quite limited. First of all, the university certainly appears to be investing very little in hiring faculty members whose expertise is directly in ESL education. For instance, the Department of English does not have any permanent faculty members whose expertise is in the field of ESL education, although close to or more than 100 international students take one English composition course per semester. When I examined the profiles of faculty members from the Linguistic and Education departments, I could only identify one recently hired faculty member whose educational background is in the ESL education. It appears to be a hiring trend in this university that ESL specialists, in the ESL division as well as in the English department, are hired on contract. Perhaps because of the lack of ESL faculty members residing in the English department, no review of the existing writing curriculum can be conducted for potential curriculum gaps.

Inconsistencies eventually exist regarding what students should learn in each university

writing course as discussed above. Perhaps because of limited investment on recruiting

ESL faculty members, per-course instructors also receive quite limited guidance and are

often left on their own to solve their course and resource related issues, not to mention

receiving any related professional development activities for further growth. This limited

investment on teaching certainly plays a negative impact on student learning.

Does the university invest anything to support Canadian students? My analysis

suggested that this university has indeed invested time and efforts to support native

English-speaking students. First of all, when I compared the available resources for the

three English composition courses for L2 students and the mandatory English course

(English 1080) for the native English-speaking undergraduates, I found hardly any

information on the English department's website for L2 students' writing courses. In

contrast, the English department created a website of English 1080 online resources,

which assists students to better search for relevant information about course materials and

to learn about how to prepare for course assignments. (please refer to

http://www.mun.ca/english/undergrad/english_1080.php.)

Further, the university recently announced its two-year pilot project, starting in

2012, to better support its first-year students academically. Ironically, in the first page of

the report about this program, the writers quoted from the MUN's mission statement that

"Memorial welcomes students and scholars from all over the world, and contributes

knowledge and shares expertise locally, nationally and internationally" (Cleyde &

Philpott, 2012, p. 1). The rest of the report merely focused on describing which particular

group of students (native English-speaking students) has been identified as students who need the additional support. The report also delineated some of the common academic challenges and difficulties this particular group of students faced, but no reference is made to international students. All the academic initiatives in the pilot project were created to better support native English –speaking students to have better success in university study. While the university has rationalized its need to actively recruit globally, examining the ways this university has allocated its funds with regard to academic support seems to suggest that it is the sole responsibility of the international students themselves to ensure they can perform well academically at this university.

Summary

In Chapter Five, I have reported five perceived must-have skills that the research participants indicated in order to manage university writing. I have also presented the skills these participants claimed to have learned from the writing courses and illustrated some examples regarding how useful the writing courses were for these students. I have described four potential learning components that these participants desired to learn from the composition course. These students would like to learn how to search as well as know what to cite for their papers and they desire to learn more different types of writing genres. Some interview participants also voiced their needs to learn how to plan and prepare a long paper. Five unfavourable teaching and learning conditions were identified, which might have contributed to the difficulties that the students experienced in their learning. The first four are related to teaching and curriculum issues. Unaddressed some essential teaching components, limited time allowance between revisions, the divorce of

reading from the composition curriculum, and ill planed first-year writing curriculum are the four factors. The last factor, limited investment in the academic support of L2 students, is considered to be an institutional constraint that plays a negative role in student learning. In Chapter Six, I provide an overview of the study along with its limitations, implications and suggested future research directions.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into ESL writers' learning experiences from their frame of reference. The specific objectives were to 1) describe their views toward process writing pedagogy, 2) identify their challenges with revision and teacher commentary, 3) delineate their perceptions of the first-year composition courses and their writing needs, and 4) unveil potential constraints that may have a negative impact on teaching and learning. Chapter Four presented the findings to the first two objectives, whereas Chapter Five addressed the latter two.

Summary

The study took place at MUN from May to December 2011 after the ethics clearance approval from ICEHR was granted. A qualitative case study approach was utilized to provide in-depth information on the investigated topic. There were 14 interview student participants, two teacher participants, and 103 student survey respondents involved in the study. The main purpose of incorporating surveys was to capture diverse voices on the investigated issues as well as to see if results from various sources would align with the interview data. The findings from the survey data and from the interview data were often aligned, which strengthened the validity of the study.

The sources of data consisted of the 103 survey questionnaires, 56 in-depth interview transcripts, and two teachers' interview transcripts. Additional sources of data included classroom observation notes, course syllabuses and students' essay samples. For

the data analysis, I applied analytical induction procedures as well as the notion of constant comparative analysis. I visited the data a number of times, looking for common themes and patterns.

Findings for Question One

The student participants held a very positive view toward process writing pedagogy. They appeared to welcome and pay attention to their teacher feedback. Engaging in multiple-draft writing provided them with opportunities to better develop, refine, and convey their thoughts in print. Since they were not native speakers of English and they were also learning the language while learning to write, they would inevitably make grammatical and mechanical errors during the writing process. Through multiple revision opportunities, these students felt that they could best eliminate these weaknesses with the assistance of their instructors. Because they worked on the same drafts more than once, some reported that they became aware of their own writing shortcomings as well as their common mistakes. They would target these shortcomings for improvement and avoid making similar mistakes in the subsequent drafts. Many participants also believed that this writing approach provided them with ample practice opportunities to strengthen their skills and their written texts.

A few negative comments were identified. A small number of the students felt that it was redundant to write the assigned papers three times, especially when they did not see themselves making any major changes between drafts. A couple of the students even felt that the time spent on writing three drafts could have been better allocated to

learning another new type of essay, which they perceived to be more beneficial for them in terms of their writing development.

Findings for Question Two

Responding to teacher commentary is a complex process and students face many challenges which could impede student writers from addressing teacher comments effectively. Six main challenges were identified. My research participants found it difficult to respond to teacher written feedback when 1) poor handwriting was left on the draft, 2) when the feedback was vague and cryptic, 3) when they lacked sufficient knowledge or/and strategies to address the feedback, 4) when the comments altered the writers' original ideas or original plans, 5) when very limited feedback was provided, and 6) when very limited revision time was allocated between drafts. Six factors that could affect student writers' revision decisions were also identified. One's perceived function of the course, one's perceived weaknesses in writing, one's English learning experience, and one's agenda for study as well as after graduation appeared to affect my participants' revision decisions. The feedback practice of the instructor as well as the evaluation criteria of the course and the assigned paper would also affect how student writers approached revision.

In the multiple drafts of a composition course, revision is essential and expected. Since it was not uncommon for me to encounter some students inquiring why their marks had not improved much between drafts, I was interested in developing a better understanding of students' perspectives on the marks they received. I found that some of them, in fact, felt quite frustrated and discouraged when they received a lower mark in the

revised draft, which to some degree dissuaded them from revising their drafts. Two of my interview students also admitted not spending much time revising because the mark percentage assigned for each draft was too minimal. They felt it was not worth the efforts to spend time revising their drafts. To entice students into putting more efforts in revisions, instructors may need to offer more incentives.

Findings for Question Three

As a per-course composition professor, I was also eager to learn if the first-year composition course somehow helped these ESL undergraduates manage their university writing. Positive feedback can validate what we do professionally as Anderson, Imdieke, and Standerford (2011) point out that "feedback from our students is vital to validating our competence and to helping us modify our teaching to meet our students' needs" (p. 12). More than 80% of the students involved in the study seemed to find that these courses were useful to help them manage university writing. These courses were helpful because students usually gained knowledge of how to structure academic papers. They also learned some, if not all, of the expected writing conventions. Some students also believed that attending these courses had helped strengthen their English competency and enabled them to produce good papers for other courses. Because of participating in these composition courses, they felt that they were much more confident in producing academic texts. For me, these positive findings have certainly validated the importance of our work in student learning.

While the participants reported that they had learned a range of skills from these composition courses, three commonly mentioned skills that the participants wished to

learn from the composition courses were identified, too. These students would like to learn more about how to select and identify relevant sources for their papers. They wished they could have learned other types of writing genres in addition to summary writing, synthesis writing, and research paper writing. Five interview participants voiced their needs to learn how to plan and organize a long paper because they often found themselves not knowing exactly what to do when tackling a long paper. These findings are useful for composition instructors to learn about the potential areas within the existing curriculum so that further efforts can be allocated for improvement.

Through my conversations with my interview participants, I also learned that they did very little writing beyond the composition courses. Among my interview participants, they seemed to be tasked to do more group papers than individual papers in their other university courses. At MUN, we often engaged students in producing individual papers in the composition courses. This finding implies that it might also serve these students well if how to work on group papers could also be addressed in the writing courses, although there is a need to conduct more studies in order to determine the type of writing the students in this university actually do beyond the composition courses and if group papers are indeed commonly assigned, instead of individual papers.

Findings for Research Question Four

To improve the quality of teaching and learning, we need to actively look for unfavourable factors existing in our teaching as well as in the institution. Five factors were identified, which potentially played a negative role in teaching and learning. While the first four factors are directly related to teaching practices and the existing curriculum;

the last one is considered to be an institutional constraint. These factors were 1) not addressing some essential teaching components, 2) giving limited time between drafts, 3) not addressing reading in composition courses, 4) ill-planned first-year writing curriculum, and 5) limited investment allocated to support the academic needs of ESL students. The limited investment made by the university to support the academic success of ESL students is believed to be a key factor that might have created the previous four unfavourable learning conditions.

In L2 writing literature, it is widely discussed and recognized that process writing pedagogy might be problematic for L2 students because it lacks explicit instruction on western rhetoric (Feez, 2002; Hyland, 2003b). The findings of my study dispute the claim and suggest that the instructor's teaching practice and his/her knowledge of L2 students and their needs play an influential role rather than the pedagogy itself. It is also well documented in the literature that L2 students may hold very different views toward revision and they may tend to revise superficially. The findings of my case study does not agree with the claim because a majority of my interview students wanted content and form feedback so that they could learn about the potential weaknesses in their written texts for improvement. My study also revealed that some writing instructors at MUN seemed to hold very different views toward revision, which might have influenced their feedback approaches. If the goal of utilizing process writing pedagogy is to encourage L2 students to revise for meaning by constantly rethinking their ideas for clarity, then the instructor's feedback practices have to align with this objective.

While responding to student writing is a labour intensive job, this study confirms that L2 students value and welcome teacher commentaries. Process writing instructors need to have some mechanism in place to encourage and monitor how their students utilize feedback. Equally important, process writing instructors need to consider expanding their knowledge of various feedback approaches (e.g., teacher feedback, peer feedback, and oral feedback) and utilizing multiple approaches to maximum the benefits of feedback. No one feedback type is better than the other, but judiciously and carefully using a number of different approaches together can reduce the weakness of any one approach (Hyland & Hyland 2006). One recommendation that writing instructors can take would be to familiarize themselves with some of the current feedback studies since many of them have delineated advantages and disadvantages of each type of feedback (see Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Some articles provide a detailed description of how to utilize a particular type of feedback in class (see Guardado & Shi, 2007; Liu 2003). Finally, no matter how committed ESL writing instructors are, the academic needs of ESL students will not be met without commitment and investment from the institution. If recruiting foreign students is one of the university-wide strategic missions, the institution also bears ethical responsibilities to have resources available to support the academic success of ESL students. It is believed that ESL writing instructors at MUN can be better supported by having at least one ESL specialist in place so that the needs of the writing instructors can be properly dealt with and teaching resources can be developed. Students can be properly supported when a review of the existing writing curriculum is conducted and necessary modifications are made.

Limitations

As with any other qualitative study, it is not appropriate to make generalizations from the findings of the current study. Because multiple factors can come into play to influence how the student writer approaches his/her revision, the findings of the study can only be specific to the student population that is captured in this study. Nevertheless, the fact that some of the commonly mentioned unsound feedback practices were found in this study may also suggest that whenever written feedback is involved, these often-cited shortcomings will inevitably emerge to hinder the effectiveness of feedback if instructors are not mindful and reflective about their feedback practices. I also would like to acknowledge that although I carefully transcribed the interview data word for word and I checked with my participants whenever I was unsure what they said, readers should be aware that I did not utilize the technique of member checking to further enhance the validity of the study.

The second limitation of the study is that 13 out of the 14 interview participants are Mandarin speakers. One should be mindful that their personal account of specific academic challenges as well as challenges related to responding to teacher commentary can be quite different compared to other groups of students with native languages other than Mandarin. I also recognized that a particular group of students did not seem to be captured for in-depth interviews in this study, that is, students who resisted revision. Although a couple of my interview participants had a tendency of not revising their papers (e.g., Participant 6), most of them did attempt to make content and form related revision changes in their drafts. Since all of the interview participants took part in the

study voluntarily, it is logical to assume that students who had little interest toward process writing would also show little interest in the study, thereby not participating in the research. Had I pre-screened my participants and only selected students who showed a tendency of resisting revision, I might have obtained a very different description of why they chose not to revise from the one illustrated in this study. Having said that, I believe that the findings of this study still have pedagogical value to help facilitate the improvement of the writing curriculum and to help build a more comprehensive view of L2 writing. As Krapels (1990) argues, "… each study provides new knowledge; each study offers new questions to ask and new areas to explore. As a field of research, then the second language composing process is rich with potential and full of vitality" (p. 53). Since the ESL student population is quite diversified, every empirical study with its unique focus in its specific context can help us better understand how and what contextual factors influence student learning. It can also bring insights and contributions to broaden and expand our understanding of L2 writers.

As already mentioned in Chapter Four, I was only able to recruit two instructors in my study. Without interviewing all of my interview participants' instructors, I was not able to answer some questions that emerged in my data analysis. For instance, I do not know why one particular instructor only provided grammar feedback even though the students were told that both content and form feedback would be provided. I also do not know why the other writing instructor only provided content feedback at the last draft when revising was no longer required. Further, although process writing pedagogy was adopted in the writing curriculum, why did some instructors' teaching practices not seem

to align with the principle of process writing pedagogy? Answers to these questions would make my study yield more nuanced findings and would better enable me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the investigated issue.

Finally, learning about the possible gap between what was learned in the composition course and what students were required to produce in other university writing was one of the goals of the study. When I designed the study, pre-screening the participants was not planned to ensure that each of my interview participants had at least one other university course that would require the submission of papers. This is the fourth limitation of the study design. Several of the interview participants did not have any other university courses that required them to write during the semester in which the students were interviewed. Some only had to produce group papers for their other university courses, not individual papers. Although they articulated their writing challenges and their desire for the writing course, one should be aware that they lacked the first hand experience in commenting how useful their writing courses were to actually help them manage other university writing tasks and to help prepare an individual paper. Future researchers who attempt to investigate the disparity between what is learned in the composition course and what is required in other university writing may be more successful if they pre-screen the students to ensure that the research participants involved have other university courses that require the submission of written papers. Such information is believed to be useful to help the modification of the writing curriculum to better support students' learning needs.

Implications for Teaching

My data strongly suggests that if teacher feedback is treated as one-way communication (instructors to students only), many problems will emerge, such as not understanding the instructor's feedback messages. Since conduction this research, I have made some modifications to my lesson plans to include the utilization of teacher feedback as one of the teaching components. In the first day of the class, I invite students to tell me what they usually do with teacher feedback and what they often do when they do not understand teacher feedback. It has enabled me to learn each individual's experience with teacher feedback and his/her available resources to solve feedback issues. I then communicate what I expect them to do with my feedback and emphasize the importance of a two-way communication. It allows my students to learn my expectations. I also select some research article paragraphs on L2 students' difficulties with teacher feedback and use these paragraphs in class when we practice paraphrasing skills. After each practice session, it also provides a good teaching opportunity for students and I to discuss collaboratively what can be done to avoid each of the difficulties indicated in the paragraph. I believe this approach has its potential to expand students' competency in making use of teacher feedback.

As illustrated in Chapter Five, to revise is not a simple skill to acquire. Although our writing curriculum is set to foster students' ability to revise by adopting process writing pedagogy, my interview students did not seem to obtain sufficient support in developing this competence. Recognizing this potential weakness in teaching I also have made efforts to address how to revise and what the difference between revising and

editing with my students. I show my students some of the common problematic texts in class. We talk in class why they are problematic and invite students to show me how these problems can be addressed. To better support students to revise, writing instructors adopting process writing pedagogy are advised to provide clear guidance on how to revise.

Most of my interview students indicated that they had experienced some difficulty with comprehending the assigned readings. It is also recommended that writing instructors should allocate some time in class to discuss the reading assignments to ensure that students comprehend the materials well before they write. Sufficient background information on the assigned reading should be provided to aid students' reading comprehension. Instructors may also need to consider allocating some course marks to testing students' knowledge of the reading materials so that students can be motivated to spend time reading the assigned texts.

Finally, although some of my interview participants utilized the writing centre to help solve their writing problems, my data seemed to suggest that not many students avail this service. Some survey participants also indicated that they did not know the existence of the writing centre. More promotion on the existence of the writing centre can help students become aware of this university service. Writing instructors can also better prepare students on how to make good use of the writing centre by discussing what services are available there and what preparation work students should do before visiting the tutors in the centre.

Suggestions for Future Research

Most of the interview student participants involved in the study had received ESL training in the ESL division at this university prior to taking the first-year composition course. Since the ESL program at this university also adopted the multiple-draft writing instruction, most of the participants generally had a longer exposure to such pedagogy. Perhaps it explained why many of them felt that they had to make meaning-related changes as well mechanics-related changes in their revisions. Future researchers may consider replicating the same study but only including ESL students who did not have any experience with process writing pedagogy. It would be interesting to see if very different attitudes toward process writing pedagogy would be identified and if there students would face different challenges compared to students who had some experience with process writing pedagogy.

Second, I perceive that this research is a high stake study as I was conducting the study to fulfill the requirements of my PhD program. Since it is a high stake study, I chose not to teach and not to study my own students to avoid any complications. For any practitioner who seeks personal growth in feedback practices, it might be more fruitful to conduct a study within one's own classroom. The instructor can then gain some useful information about his/her own feedback practices from his/her students' reaction and make practical changes to improve teaching and learning. One recruitment suggestion would be to offer some sort of incentives for participation (e.g., offering gift certificates) while still, of course, complying with all the rules set by ICHER.

When should process writing instructors assign marks? Should they assign marks for each draft or should they just assign marks for the last draft? To properly answer these questions, more research studies should be designed to examine and compare if students revise differently when the mark is only assigned to the finished product with when the mark is assigned in each draft. The results of these studies can better inform writing instructors when and how to assign marks. This information is also useful for instructors to make informed decisions on whether or not to assign marks between drafts. If there is no difference, instructors can just assign the marks for the last draft in order to avoid de-motivating students during the revision process.

Finally, as we know, feedback is commonly utilized in many courses in post-secondary education. More future studies focusing on uncovering additional factors that may hinder learners' efforts to respond to feedback can broaden our knowledge base in this area. Studies that look into identifying conditions in which students would tend to utilize feedback can also be helpful for instructors who often provide feedback.

Researcher's Reflection of the Whole Research Journey

As mentioned in Chapter One, I was never formally trained in teaching writing and providing feedback. I taught based on my own learning experiences. Prior to conducting this study, I knew very little about giving feedback or about what writing my students actually did beyond my class. I undertook this research to seek personal growth. Am I now an expert in providing effective feedback? This research journey has not yet transformed me into an expert in providing feedback. In fact, I believe I may never become an expert in providing feedback because so many factors, controllable or not

controllable, can minimize the effectiveness of teacher feedback. Nevertheless, the research journey has enabled me to become more knowledgeable about feedback practices and become more mindful about numerous potential factors that can impede the pedagogical value of our written feedback. I have also gained a better insight regarding the revision process, not only from the student participants but also from my own experience of writing up this dissertation. This has further reminded me that a good feedback provider needs to not only provide effective feedback but also have tools in place to ensure that the recipient understands the feedback. The feedback provider also needs to help the receiver strengthen his/her competence in utilizing the feedback. As written feedback still plays an important role in teaching and learning, I have come to realize the importance of learning about other feedback methods that can complement written feedback. I believe I am much more mindful now regarding how I should provide feedback and how I should support my students in their revision. This study began with an intention to seek inspiration. Gaining knowledge about the potential problems in the first-year composition courses and feeling more confident about providing feedback are the pedagogical insights I gained from the whole journey.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. Which department/faculty are you currently registered in? _____
2. What year are you in now at MUN? _____
3. Which country are you from? _____
4. What is your first language? _____
5. Which English course are you taking/ did you take?
   English 102F _____ English 1020 _____ English 1021 _____
6. How would you rate your English proficiency?
   Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor _____ Others (Please be specific) _____
7. How would you rate your skills in English writing?
   Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor _____ Others (please be specific) _____
8. Name skills you have learned from your writing courses that have helped you prepare for writing requirements in other university courses. (e.g., library searching skills, essay organization skills)

   _____

9. In order to well manage the writing tasks required by other university courses, you may want to have certain writing skills. Please write down the skills that you wish to have learned but have never been taught in your writing classes. (e.g., how to select proper outside sources)

   _____

10. Choose 5 items (skills/competencies) below that you find difficult to develop/master in order to handle university writing.
   i) **Please also rank them from 1 to 5 (5 being the most difficult and 1 the least difficult among the 5 items you choose).**
   ii) **If you have two items that you feel they have the same degree of difficulty, you can assign the same number.**

____ Vocabulary	____ Edit your papers	____ Understand the reading text
____ Know teachers' expectations	____ know specific vocabulary for your major	____ Locate relevant sources for your writing
____ Know specific writing expectations and writing requirements for your own major	____ Grammar	____ Citation Skills (e.g., how to reference outside sources in your writing)

Others (please be specific)

_____

11.　Choose 5 items below that you feel you **must** have in order to handle writing tasks at MUN.

____ Language skills	____ Time management skills	____ Vocabulary	____ Research skills
____ Citation skills (e.g., know how to reference outside sources in your writing)	____ Task management skills (e.g., know how to successfully finish a task assigned by your instructor)	____ Synthesizing skills (e.g., draw connections among articles you read)	____ Paraphrasing skills (being able to restate someone's ideas in your own words)
____ Summarizing skills	____ Rhetorical Skills (e.g., being able to present your arguments effectively with relevant evidence in writing)	____ Being able to present your ideas logically in English writing	____ Developing thesis statements and topic sentences for your papers

Others (Please be specific)

_____

12.　How did/do you feel about submitting each of your essay assignments 3 times in your English writing classes? **(you can choose more than one option; if the option is not there, you can write down your own)**

____ Good for improving my writing skills	____ Too much work	____ Waste my time
____ It gives me a chance to learn my weaknesses in writing	____ It's not useful as my other courses only require me to submit one draft of essays	____ It allowed me to learn how to refine (make better) my papers

Others (Please be specific)

_____

13. How much of each essay do/did you read over again when your writing instructor returns/returned it to you?

1ˢᵗ/2ⁿᵈ drafts
All of it _____ Most of it _____ Some of it _____ None of it _____

Final products
All of it _____ Most of it _____ Some of it _____ None of it _____

14. How much of the instructor's comments and corrections did you think about carefully?

1ˢᵗ/2ⁿᵈ drafts
All of them _____ Most of them _____ Some of them _____ None of them _____

Final products
All of them _____ Most of them _____ Some of them _____ None of them _____

15. If you paid attention to what your instructor wrote, how much attention did you pay to the comments and corrections involving :

1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ drafts

	A lot	Some	A little	None	Not Applicable
Organization	____	____	____	____	_____
Content/Ideas	____	____	____	____	_____
Vocabulary	____	____	____	____	_____
Grammar	____	____	____	____	_____
Mechanics	____	____	____	____	_____

(e.g., punctuation, spelling)
Others (if you would like to add some more information)

_____

_____

Final products

	A lot	Some	A little	None	Not Applicable
Organization	____	____	____	____	_____
Content/Ideas	____	____	____	____	_____
Vocabulary	____	____	____	____	_____
Grammar	____	____	____	____	_____
Mechanics	____	____	____	____	_____

(e.g., punctuation, spelling)

Others (if you would like to add some more information)

_____

16. What challenges did you face when reading your teachers' comments? (e.g., understand your instructor's handwriting, try to figure what the comments meant)

_____

17. Describe what you usually did after you read your writing instructor's comments and corrections (e.g., Look up the corrections in a grammar book; See a tutor; Rewrite your paper; Make an appointment with your instructor to go over the teacher's comments)
$1^{st}/2^{nd}$ drafts :

_____
_____

Final products:

_____
_____

18. What challenges did you face when responding to your teacher's comments? **(you can choose more than one option)**

_____ I did not understand the comments	_____ I understood the comments but didn't know how to revise
_____ I understood the comments but didn't know how to gather additional information to better support my ideas	_____ I did not agree with the comments but felt I had to agree with my teacher's comments in order to receive a good mark
_____ My teacher's comments changed my original ideas	_____ The comments were too vague (not clear) so I did not know what to do

Others

_____

19. Are there ever any comments or corrections that you did not understand?
Yes _____   No _____
If yes, can you give an example? Why did you not understand?

_____
_____

20. What did you usually do about the comments or corrections that you did not understand? (e.g., ignore the comments, go to the writing centre, make an appointment with the teacher, ask friends for help…)

_____

_____

21. When did you decide to ignore your writing teacher's comments? **(you can choose more than one option)**

____ When I did not understand the comments	____ When I was in a rush to finish the revised essay
____ When I had other papers due	____ When I did not agree with the comments
____ When my marks from previous drafts were not good	

Others

_____

22. Why did you decide not to revise? (you can choose more than one option)

____ I did not have time to revise as I had many other papers to write	____ English writing course is not important
____ I did not know who to fix my errors	____ I did not understand the comments
____ I did not find that revising could help improve my essay	____ I did not get a good mark

Others

_____

23. In general, do you feel that your instructor's comments and corrections have helped you improve your English writing skills? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. Do you think learning to write in this way (writing each essay 3 times) help you develop your writing skills in English?
Yes and Why

_____

_____

No and Why

_____

_____

_____

25. Do you feel that the skills you learned from your writing course(s) help you better manage other university writing assignments?
Yes.
Please indicate in what ways your writing courses have helped you better manage other university writing assignments.

_____

_____

_____

_____

No.
Please indicate why not

_____

_____

_____

26. Where do you usually go to seek assistance for your writing needs? (you can choose more than one option)

| ____ The writing centre | ____ Your English composition courses | ____ Friends |
| ____ Spouse | ____ Classmates in the writing course | |

Others (Please identify)

_____

27. In your opinion, what services at MUN are missing or insufficient so that some of your writing needs have not been properly met?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

28. Any comments you would like to add.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B – Interview Consent Form

Title: Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students
Researcher: Echo Pittman, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Education), Memorial
                  University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-
                  864-8621. Email: echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of
                  Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-737-3411.
                  Email: eyeoman@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a study entitled "Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students". I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This research is part of the requirement for a PhD.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what my study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more information, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you choose not to take part in the study or if you decide to withdraw from the study once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

In higher education, good written communication is crucial to students' success (Zhu, 2004) because writing is often the main channel by which professors assess students' understanding of course work. Strong writing skills are also essential for securing a salaried job after university (National Commission on Writing, 2004). While it is known that English as a second language (ESL) students face numerous challenges when studying overseas, they often perceive writing as one of the most difficult tasks (Berman & Cheng, 2001). In ESL composition courses, students are normally asked to write each essay with multiple drafts, which is commonly known as process writing pedagogy. However, both critiques from the research literature (e.g., Silva 1997; Matsuda, 2003) and my own teaching practice suggest that this pedagogy may not be the best approach.

We know little about what experiences ESL students have with process writing pedagogy and whether ESL writing courses have successfully prepared students to manage writing requirements across the university curriculum. Listening to students describing their experiences can enable educators to be more responsive to ESL students' needs.

Purpose of study:

The purpose of my study is to describe the experiences of ESL students in process writing and to document challenges you face in academic contexts. This study will also explore the role of the university in the acquisition of academic literacy. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to talk about your experience in first year English classes

and challenges you face in academic writing. During my four separate interviews with you, I will use a video camera and audio recorder to record what you have to say in order to ensure as much accuracy as possible. Each interview will normally take from 30 minutes to one hour.

Potential Benefits

The study can help university instructors understand the challenges ESL students face in academic writing, especially process writing instruction, and enable them to meet the needs of students better. In addition, you will be asked to keep a revision sheet in order for me to understand how you respond to your teacher's comments and identify questions for the follow up interviews. Students who keep a revision sheet are normally more aware of the writing challenges they face and the common errors they tend to make (Ferris, 2003). Therefore, this log has a potential benefit for the development of your English writing.

Possible Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this study. The only inconvenience may be the time you may spend for this study. In this study, you will participate in four separate interviews. Each interview will last between 30 minutes to 1 hour. You will also need to spend some time keeping a revision sheet for each of your essay assignments. However, each log should only take about 30 minutes.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

You have the right to choose not to participate, the right to stop the interview at anytime, and the right to leave the study at any time. All the information gathered from you will be destroyed at once if you leave the study. I will not tell anyone your name or any information that could identify you. Your real name will not be used in the study unless you wish to be identified. As well, even if you agree to be interviewed, you can still tell me not to use the material after the interviews.

In addition, I may show parts of your video recordings when I present the findings to my PhD committee members and/or at academic conference and workshops. In order to participate in my study, you have the right to tell me not to show any of your video recordings. If you agree that I can show your video recordings but do not wish to be identified by potential viewers, I will blank out your face. Although every effort will be made to best ensure your confidentiality and anonymity when showing your recordings, it is usually much more problematic to do so under such circumstance.

Reporting of Results

There are four possible methods that I intend to use to report the findings. I will write about the study in my dissertation which will be examined as part of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. I also plan to submit articles for possible publication in academic journals (i.e., *TESL Canada, Journal of Second Language Writing,* etc). I will also present the findings at academic conferences and workshops at MUN to make others aware of the challenges ESL students face. In

addition, while presenting the findings to my PhD committee members or at academic conference and academic workshops, I may show parts of your recordings to enhance the truthfulness of my data presentation and to encourage more discussion on the topic under investigation.

Storage of Data:

All the data gathered from the interviews will be saved on my password protected computer for at least five years. In addition, all the essay samples and revision sheets collected for each individual participant will be identified by a number instead of the author's name. I will be the only person who can identify the original authors to ensure their confidentiality. These essay samples and revision sheets will be protected by being stored in a locked drawer for at least five years. I am the only person who has the access to the locked drawer. After five years, all of the essay samples and revision sheets will be shredded. All of the data stored in my computer will be erased. I will not show the data to anyone without your permission.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact

Echo Pittman, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Education), Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-778-0408. Email: echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca

You can also contact my supervisor

Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-864-3411. Email: eyeoman@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2861.

Permission

I understand the purpose of this study and am very willing for Echo Pittman to interview me and collect information about my writing experience for her study. (Please initial only the ones you agree with).

- I am willing for the researcher to cite my words in any publications that result from this study _____ [initials].

- I would prefer that my name be identified in any publications that result from this study _____ [initials]

- I would prefer that my name not be identified in any publications that result from this study even though I do not mind if the researcher cites my words _____ [initials].

- I am willing for the researcher to show my video recordings to her PhD committee members and at the academic conferences and workshops and I would like to be identified _____ [initials].

- I am willing for the researcher to show my video recordings to her PhD committee members and at the academic conferences and workshops but I do not want to be identified _____ [initials].

- Please do not show any of my video recordings _____ [initials].

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this project at any time.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your Signature:
I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent From has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Researcher's Signature:
I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____   _____
Signature of investigator   Date

Appendix C - Consent Form for Composition Instructors

Title: Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students
Researcher: Echo Pittman, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Education), Memorial
               University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-
               778-0408. Email: echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of
               Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-737-3411. Email:
               eyeoman@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in my dissertation study entitled "Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students". I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. As a graduate student, this research is part of the requirement for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. You may contact me or my supervisor at anytime when you have any questions.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what my study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any other information given to you by the researcher.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you choose not to take part in the study or if you decide to withdraw from the study once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:
In higher education, good written communication is crucial to students' success at (Zhu, 2004) because writing is often the main channel by which professors assess students' understanding of course work. Strong writing skills are also essential for securing a salaried job after university (National Commission on writing, 2004). While it is known that English as a second language (ESL) students face numerous challenging when studying overseas, they often perceive writing as one of the most difficult tasks (Berman & Cheng, 2001). Many of them may struggle with and are fearful about academic writing (Fox 1994; Steinman 2003). In ESL composition courses, students are normally asked to write each essay with multiple drafts, which is commonly known as process writing pedagogy. However, both critiques from the research literature (e.g., Silva 1997; Matsuda, 2003) and my own teaching practice suggest that this pedagogy may not be the best approach.
We know little about what experiences ESL students have with process writing pedagogy and whether ESL writing courses have successfully prepared students to manage writing requirements across the university curriculum. Listening to students describing their experiences and struggle (if any) can help identify the mismatch between

the skills taught in ESL writing courses and the writing demands of the disciplinary courses, thereby enabling educators to be more responsive to ESL students' needs.

Purpose of study:
The purpose of my study is to describe the experiences of ESL students in process writing and to document challenges these students face in academic contexts. This critical multiple-case study will also explore how the institution alleviates or reinforces the challenges that ESL students experience in the acquisition of academic literacy.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this study, you will be asked to allow me to observe your classes and collect a copy of your course syllabus. I may have informal exchanges with you after my observations about things I observed and your general impression of the class and process writing instruction. The observations made in your classes will be recorded in the form of written notes. The informal exchanges I have with you will be audio taped. The purpose of observing your classes and having informal conversations with you is to enable me to provide a detailed description of the classroom context and how writing is taught in my dissertation. The observation notes and the informal exchange transcripts will also serve as a supplement to help me identify questions or events for further consideration in my following visit of the site or interviews with my student participants.

Potential Benefits
The study can help university instructors develop a better understanding of the challenges and difficulties ESL students face in academic writing. More specifically, it helps us to learn the experience and challenges students have in process writing instruction. The results of the study will be used to update ESL curriculum designers and instructors at MUN so that modifications of the current curriculum (if any) can be made to best meet the writing needs of ESL students. When our ESL students feel satisfied with the curriculum, it may have the potential to make your teaching experience more enjoyable.

Possible Risks
There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
You have the right to choose not to participate, and the right to leave the study at any time. Once you decide to withdraw from the study, all the information gathered from you will be destroyed. In addition, the information gathered from you will not be used once you withdraw from the study. Your real name will not be used in the study unless you wish to be identified.
Although every effort will be made to best ensure your confidentiality and anonymity, it is usually much more problematic to do so as others can easily access to MUN's course offering website to learn which instructor taught/is teaching which course for each semester.

Reporting of Results

There are three possible methods that I intend to use to report the findings. I will write about the study and the results of the study in my dissertation. The dissertation will be given to Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman and my committee members to examine as part of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. I also plan to submit scholarly articles for possible publication in academic journals (i.e., *TESL Canada, Journal of Second Language Writing, Journal of Modern Language*). I also would like to present the findings in academic conference presentations or run workshops at MUN to make others aware of the challenges ESL students face.

Storage of Data:

All the data gathered from the interviews will be protected by being stored in a locked drawer for at least five years. After five years, all of the data will be destroyed in accordance with Memorial University's policy. I am the only person who will be able to access the information from the drawer. I will not show the data to anyone without your permission.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact

Echo Pittman, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Education), Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-778-0408. Email: echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca

You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-864-3411. Email: eyeoman@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2861.

Permission

I understand the purpose of this study and am very willing for Echo Pittman to observe my classes, gather a copy of my course syllabus and have informal exchanges with me about my classes. (Please initial only the ones you agree with).

I am willing for the researcher to cite my words with my name identified in any publications that result from this study. _____ [initials].

I am willing for the researcher to cite my words in any publications that result from this study but I do not want my name to be identified. _____ [initials].

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

The researchers will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your Signature:

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent From has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____   _____
Signature of investigator   Date

Appendix D: Survey Consent Form

Title: Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students
     Researcher: Echo Pittman, PhD Candidate (Faculty of Education),
     Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8,
     Telephone: 709-778-0408. Email: echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca
     Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman, Faculty of Education, Memorial
     University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B3X8, Telephone: 709-
     864-3411. Email: eyeoman@mun.ca

    You are invited to take part in a survey for my dissertation study entitled "Their Voices, Our Resources: Pedagogical Inspiration from Our Students". You are being contacted because you are a non native English speaker and you are taking or have taken one of the following three courses: English 102F, English 1020, and English 1021. I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. This research is part of the requirement for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. You may contact me or my supervisor at anytime when you have any questions.

    The survey involves answering questions about your experiences in academic writing in general. You will also answer some specific questions about your experience in your first-year English courses. The survey takes about 25 minutes to complete. The purpose of this survey is: 1) to gather information about your university writing experience in ESL classes and other university courses; 2) to collect information about the challenges you face in academic contexts. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will be completely anonymous. You do not have to answer any question you would rather not answer. There are no consequences if you decide not to take part or not to complete the survey.

    If you agree to complete the survey, please do NOT write your name on it. After you finish filling it out, please email the survey back to Echo Pittman at echo.pittman@mi.mun.ca. If you are taking the survey in class, you can simply return the survey to the researcher. By filling out the survey, you are consenting to participate.

    The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2861.

Please keep this letter for your records. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix E: Revision Sheet

Assignment _____ Draft _____

- How many changes did you make in your first paragraph?

- How many changes did you make in your second paragraph?

- How many changes did you make in your third paragraph?

- How many changes did you make in y our fourth paragraph?

- How many changes did you make in your final paragraph?

- How much time did you spend revising this paper?

- What kinds of changes did you make the most in this draft (you just need to circle the item; if the item you want is not there, you can write it down)?

  Grammatical related changes, Organization related changes,
  Sentence related changes, Spelling errors and punctuation errors

- Are there any difficulties you had when you revised your paper? If yes, please list some examples. Here is an example for your reference.
  In paragraph 2, sentence 3: I don't really know what to revise because I can not really read my teacher's hand writing comments.

  Any other things that you would like to add regarding revising this draft