

Teacher Written Feedback in EFL Classroom: Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi High School- Kenitra, Morocco- as a Case Study

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Abstract

This paper is an empirical and analytical study of the uses of written feedback by Moroccan high school EFL teachers. It tries to investigate how EFL teachers in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school respond to students' compositions. Strong emphasis is laid on the types of teacher written feedback, with a focus on integrated feedback (form and content) as an effective way to respond to students' written work. The ultimate goal of this paper is to ascertain the types and forms of teacher written feedback prevalent amongst Moroccan EFL high school teachers. In this light, the study seeks to investigate the following research questions: (1) Which types of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers employ to respond to students' compositions? (2) Which forms of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers' employ to respond to students' compositions? To answer these questions, the present study used a mixed method approach that included: classroom observation checklist, document analysis of corrected writing productions and students' questionnaire. The key findings illustrated that teachers at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school relied heavily on form-focused feedback. It also revealed that teachers opted for correction symbols and commentary.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Written Feedback, Writing skill, Baccalaureate students.

1. Introduction

The English language has got a considerable role in fields such as politics, business, and education. So, it is important to learn such a language for different purposes, especially education. In fact, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is a complex and demanding process. One should acquire its four skills namely, speaking, reading, listening and writing. The latter is probably the most difficult skill amongst the foregoing four skills. The process of writing requires a great deal of efforts, time and practice. As a matter of fact, writing in a foreign language requires knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, organization and so forth. In addition, the writer needs a great deal of comments and responses about his/her performance. Thus, it is important that the instructor should constantly provide feedback so as to help the learner acquire the writing skill.

1.1. Research Problem, Questions and Hypothesis

Teacher written feedback is essential to help students enhance their writing skills. Students, to a great extent, value teachers' comments and remarks; thus, teachers should make efforts to ascertain the types and forms of written feedback conducive to students' improvements. In fact, some teachers think that a good piece of writing is hinged only on the form of the language. Herein emerged the academic need to ascertain the types of feedback teachers at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school provide. Thus, the research questions are as follows:

- Which types of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers employ to respond to students' compositions?
- Which forms of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers' employ to respond to students' compositions?

In an attempt to investigate the type of feedback used on students' writing, it is hypothesized that Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi English teachers so heavily use form-focused feedback to respond to their students' compositions.

1.2. Research Purpose

The overall purpose of this descriptive study is to investigate the types of teacher written feedback used to respond to students' compositions in a Moroccan EFL classroom. The data is obtained through observation, document analysis and questionnaire at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school.

1.3. Research Significance

This study is an important endeavour to ascertain the types and forms of teacher written feedback used in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi High school. Generally, it tries to give Moroccan high school EFL teachers an idea about the appropriate written feedback they should adopt to respond to students' compositions. In fact, it is crucial that teachers should investigate which types and forms are most effective.

2. Related literature review:

2.1. The Written Feedback

This section defines teacher written feedback and discusses its different types and forms with focus on which is the most effective one amongst them. It also discusses students' reaction to teacher written feedback.

2.2. Defining Feedback

Generally, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) describe the notion feedback as "the listener's or reader's response given to the learner's speech or writing" (p. 34). That is, both productive skills are hinged on the reader's or listener's response in order to be ameliorated. Specifically, in teaching context, Richards and Schmidt (2010) defines feedback as "comments or other information that learners receive concerning their success on learning tasks or tests, either from the teacher or other persons" (p. 217). K. Hyland (2003) regards feedback as a pivotal element in enhancing students' writing skills and contributing to students' learning. It is worth stating that Vygotsky (as cited in, K. Hyland, 2003) discusses a stage in cognitive growth named "the zone of proximal development" where skills are extended through the guidance and response of expert others" (p. 177). In fact, the teaching of writing must go hand-in-hand with providing feedback, because it is crucial to enhance students' performance in writing.

2.3. Teacher Written Feedback

Teacher written feedback is still considered pivotal for improving students' writing in an EFL classroom. Teachers and students recognize the importance of teacher written feedback; thus, teachers feel that they are compelled to comment on students' paper, justify their grades, and so forth (K. Hyland, 2003). Similarly, F. Hyland (as cited in K. Hyland, 2003) states that second language students exceedingly value their teachers' written feedback and try to make use of it. Despite the large amount of research that has concluded that teacher written feedback is ineffective as a way of improving students writing, it is still conducive to improving students' writing if it is employed appropriately (K. Hyland, 2003). As regards research on L1

writing, Sommers (1982) states that “teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting” (p. 149). That is to say, students' attention is on teacher written feedback rather than on their writing; therefore, they neglect their initial purpose which is writing. He adds that several examples of teacher-written feedback are irrelevant to the text in a sense that they can be ‘interchanged’ and ‘rubber-stamped from one text to another. That is, most teachers' comments are not specifically designed to students' texts; if they are moved from one to text to another and would still make sense. For instance, comments such as “think more about [their] audience, avoid colloquial language, avoid the passive, avoid prepositions at the end of sentences or con-junctions at the beginning of sentences, be clear, be specific, be precise, but above all, think more about what [they] are thinking about” (p. 152). Therefore, Sommers (1982) suggests that teachers should be precise and thoughtful with their comments in order to help students concentrate solely on the purposes of their writing.

Concerning research on second language (L2) writing, Cumming (as cited in Zamel, 1985) points out the techniques ESL teachers implement to comment on students' texts. Chief amongst them is error identification. This technique seems to be widely adopted by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers since they maintain that their sole task is to identify language problems rather than to develop students' cognitive abilities. It is worth noting that error identification is not workable. Zamel (1985) seems to agree with research carried in L1 writing (e.g., Sommers, 1982). She argues that ESL writing teachers constantly misread students' compositions and therefore fail to give accurate and thoughtful comments; they rather provide a myriad of abstract rules, write arbitrary corrections, respond to students' compositions as final products and focus on the form more than content. Zamel stresses that ESL teachers often pay attention to the form of the text rather than its content, because they “overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers” (1985, p. 86). As a reaction to the phenomena of form-related versus content-related correction, Williams adroitly puts forward, as a reaction to the phenomena of form related versus content-related correction, that:

It is the difference between reading for typographical errors and reading for content. When we read for typos, letters constitute the field of attention; content becomes virtually inaccessible. When we read for content, semantic structures constitute the field of attention; letters-for the most part-recede from our consciousness (As cited in Zamel, 1985, p. 86).

That is to say, ESL teachers are often distracted by form-related problems, and thus fail to attend to meaning-related problems in students' writing. In fact, there are three types of teacher written feedback, namely, form-focused feedback, content-focused feedback and integrated feedback.

2.4. Types of Teacher Written Feedback

Teacher written feedback can target different aspects of language. It can be designed to comment on either the form or content of students' compositions, and sometimes it can comment on both aspects at the same time. Thus, three different types of teacher written feedback are discussed in this subsection.

2.4.1. Form-focused Feedback

Truscott (1996) claims that form-focused feedback (or grammar correction) is ineffective as a way of responding to students' writing. He adds that grammar correction could also be harmful and therefore ESL teachers should avoid it all at once. Such a radical conclusion could be accurate, since there has been scant

research, which fails to provide any solid theoretical ground or critically and thoroughly study the drawbacks of form-focused feedback. It is worth noting that Truscott sees that ESL teachers mistime grammar correction. That is, L2 learners normally acquire certain grammatical structures in a certain order; nevertheless, teachers correct some grammatical errors, which learners have not acquired yet. In fact, Truscott's article ignites a great deal of debate on the effectiveness of form-focused feedback in L2 settings. Chief amongst these debates is Ferris' (1999), who argues that Truscott's conclusions about error correction is rather premature and strong. She notes a number of limitations; firstly, Truscott's definition of grammar correction is vague. He (as cited in Ferris, 1999) defines error correction as "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately." Later on, he adds, "correction comes in many different forms, but for present purposes such distinctions have little significance" (p.4). Such a definition, to Ferris, is deemed vague, and forms of error correction can be either careful and clear; or ineffective and misleading to students. Secondly, she observes that Truscott tends to advocate for previous negative research and dismiss positive research on form-focused feedback. However, Ferris admits that research which advocates for the effectiveness of form-focused feedback is inadequate, and Truscott's article, in fact, draws teachers and scholars' attention to rethink the effectiveness of such a type of teacher written feedback. Subsequently, other research tries to exhibit the benefits of grammar correction. Fathman and Whalley (1990) state that teachers should correct students' grammatical errors, because it improves students' accuracy.

2.4.2. Content-focused Feedback

Previous research on content-focused yields positive results. In an examination of four groups using different types of feedback, Semke (1984) states that the group that receives comments on content has scored better than the other groups. He finds out that commenting on content only is more effective than correcting errors only; correcting errors and commenting on content; or forcing students to correct their own errors. Zamel (1985) also states that teachers should give content-based feedback on the first, and point out grammatical errors later. She suggests this type of teacher written feedback, because students, if given both content-based and form-based feedback at the same time, may be perplexed to ascertain which type of feedback deserves more attention. It is worth noting that a great deal of research prioritizes content-focused feedback over form-based feedback. For instance, Kepner (1991) believes that meaning-focused feedback is more effective than form-focused feedback. She concludes that the former is conducive to enhance students' language accuracy and the level of thinking in L2 writing. Whereas the latter is deemed ineffective to develop neither aspect of L2 students' compositions. However, Lee (As cited in Park, 2006) seems to disagree with previous research, he maintains that correcting grammatical errors is easier than correcting meaning and ideas. Therefore, he sees that form-focused feedback is workable than content-focused feedback. Despite Lee's conclusion, many researchers agree that meaning-focused feedback is more effective than form-focused feedback.

2.4.3. Integrated Feedback

Song (as cited in Park, 2006) endeavours to ascertain which type of teacher written feedback (content-focused feedback or integrated feedback) yields better results. He finds out that integrated-focused feedback is conducive to enhance students' writing skills. To illustrate, the study's results show that students who have received integrated feedback gain higher grades than those who have received content-focused feedback in aspects such as content, organization and mechanics; whilst they score similar grades in aspects such as vocabulary and style. It is worth noting that integrated feedback yields better results. Ashwell's experiment (as cited in Park, 2006) proves the effectiveness of integrated feedback. It concludes that

integrated feedback is the most effective type of responding to students' writing, because it has helped students demonstrate a good mastery of writing skills. Such a conclusion urges Ashwell to respond to Zamel's (1985) argument that teachers should give content-based feedback on the first, and point out grammatical errors later. He also refutes Fathman and Whalley; Ferris' (as cited in Park, 2006) arguments that integrated feedback can be a harmful and ineffective practice by stating that integrated feedback is innocuous, and can lead to improvements on both levels: content aspect and grammatical accuracy. These types of teacher written feedback are typically given in a certain form.

2.5. Forms of Teacher Written Feedback

Teacher written feedback may take different forms. K. Hyland (2003) sketched out the most common forms. Chief amongst them are commentary, rubrics, correction symbols and electronic feedback.

2.5.1. Commentary

Commentary feedback is seen as the most common practice amongst ESL teachers. K. Hyland (2003) states that this technique takes the form of handwritten commentary on students' composition. This form of teacher written feedback is often written at the margin and the end at the same time. The former is more effective in a sense that they indicate the place of the problem immediately and show students how teachers progressively correct their writing, whereas, the latter, can only summarize the teachers' overall remark about students' texts. In fact, commentary is "best seen as responding to students' work rather than evaluating what they have done, stating how the text appears to us as readers, how successful we think it has been, and how it could be improved" (K. Hyland, 2003, p. 180). It is worth pointing out that this form of teacher written feedback is effective to provide students with comments on different level; it is not restricted to form-focused feedback, but it can include comments on content as well.

2.5.2. Rubrics

K. Hyland (2003) defines rubrics as "the use of cover sheets which set out the criteria that have been used to assess the assignment and how the student has performed in relation to these criteria" (p. 181). Normally, this form of teacher written feedback is handed to the student in order to have an idea how the teacher assesses and evaluates their compositions. K. Hyland also states that rubrics show "students what the teacher values in a particular piece of writing" (p.181). A sample of rubric adopted from K. Hyland (2003) is attached (see appendix A).

2.5.3. Correction Symbols

Correction symbols (also known as minimal marking) "refers to a type of in-text, form-based feedback" (K. Hyland, 2003, p. 181). Harmer (2007b) describes the use of correction symbols by stating that it involves underlining and using symbols accordingly to indicate students' mistakes. Oshima and Hogue (1997) provide the most common correction symbols used by teachers (see appendix B). Many researchers highly recommend the importance of using symbols or codes in correction, because writing a myriad of comments can be demotivating for students on the one hand, and time-consuming for teachers on the other. Therefore, K. Hyland (2003) observes that such a technique is "neater and less threatening than masses of red ink and helps students to find and identify their mistakes (p. 181). Harmer (2007b) also states that correction symbols "makes correction look less damaging" (p. 120). It is worth pointing out that, in order to use correction symbols effectively, teachers should explain what these symbols and codes stand for beforehand; otherwise, they would confuse students. However, there are some disadvantages of using correction symbols. K. Hyland (2003) states that "it is not always possible to unambiguously categorize a

problem, particularly when it extends beyond a sentence boundary” (p. 181). For instance, when teachers try to categorize a content problem; they find it quite difficult, since correction symbols technique is used merely as form-based rather than content-based feedback. Harmer (2007b) points out correction symbols are used only to respond to students’ writing as a final product rather than a process one. He adds that teachers should point out both form and content problems.

2.5.4. Electronic Feedback

Nowadays, students can receive feedback from their teachers through electronic mediums such as Facebook, emails, and to name but a few. This form of teacher written is workable, since through which:

Teachers can provide comments on electronic submissions by email or by using the comment function, which allows feedback to be displayed in a separate window while reading a word-processed text. Feedback on errors can also be linked to online explanations of grammar or to concordance lines from authentic texts to show students examples of features they may have problems using correctly (K. Hyland, 2003, p. 183).

It is worth noting that teachers can immediately provide students with invaluable online links showing them the correct usage of a certain grammatical structure, or providing them with more information about a factual point. In other words, teachers can provide both form-focused feedback and content-focused feedback.

2.6. Students’ Reaction to Teacher Written Feedback

Students’ preference for types and forms of teacher written feedback varies considerably; thus, teachers should consider what students pay attention in their revision. F. Hyland (as cited in K. Hyland, 2003) observes that “the effect of written feedback on student revisions in subsequent drafts has not been extensively studied, although it seems that students try to use most of the usable feedback they are given” (p. 179). That is to say, students value teacher written feedback and see it useful to their improvements. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) state that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners favour form-focused feedback, whereas ESL learners attend to content-focused feedback. They argue that the underlying reason for this predilection is students’ needs. For instance, EFL learners use English as a form of language practice, whereas ESL learners need the language in their daily practices. However, Enginarlar (1993) sees that EFL learners attend not only to form-focused feedback, but also to content focused feedback; he therefore states that such finding is a reminder for EFL teachers who overuse the red pen. To illustrate, this is a comment which an EFL student have made to respond to teachers’ way of responding to his/her composition; he/she says that:

I think you waste too much time with dots, commas, date on paper or where you write your name. You should concentrate more on the context (content?) of writing. First, I think you should read the composition without considering gr/sp/p and then correct it. Sometimes, I feel my paper is being graded only in terms of gr and sp (emphasis added) (Enginarlar, 1993, p. 199).

The student’s comment above, should urge EFL teachers to use content feedback rather than form focused feedback alone. However, according to a number of research (Chandler; Ferris, cited in Park, 2006) it is concluded that “when students received only meaning-related feedback, they tend to feel their teachers

don't pay much attention to their writing or even regard that teachers lack sincerity" (p.7). In other words, teachers should use integrated feedback which provides comments on two levels: content and form. In fact, Radecki and Swales (as cited in, K. Hyland, 2003) notes that "in contexts where they are asked to write multiple drafts, however, students claim to prefer comments on ideas and organization in earlier drafts and on grammar in later drafts, perhaps influenced by process oriented feedback practices" (p. 179). That is to say, the process approach is convenient for such types of feedback where teachers provide comments on both grammar and content.

3. Methodology

This section is going to present the methodological procedure designed to answer the research questions and hypothesis. It consists of research design, target population and sampling, data collection and analysis procedure.

3.1. Research Design

Generally, this research is a mixed method one which lends itself to answer the research questions enlisted in the introduction of this paper. In other words, this research is going to present both qualitative and quantitative ideas regarding the researched phenomenon. By definition, quantitative approach "involves the generation of data in quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion" (Kothari, 2004, p. 5), whereas qualitative approach to research is concerned with "subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour" (Kothari, 2004, p. 5). In fact, Kitchenham (2010) states that the use of mixed methods fit well in a case study research. Based on these, this case study is going to describe the types and forms of teacher written feedback used in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school. As far as research design is concerned, this research has employed a descriptive research design. The latter is defined as "those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group" (Kothari, 2004, p. 37). Accordingly, this research will describe the data using mixed methods to ascertain the types and forms of teacher written feedback in the aforementioned high school.

3.2. Target Population and Sampling

The populations of this study are Moroccan high school EFL teachers and students in Kenitra. Moroccan high school EFL teachers normally teach different streams, namely, arts, humanities, science and economics; students selected for this study also belong to the foregoing streams. Since it is not practically feasible to observe, question or analyse all these populations (teacher/student), a sampling method is highly needed in this respect. Namely, a convenience sampling method is employed to choose samples from Moroccan high school EFL teachers and students. This sampling method "involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe. When population elements are selected for inclusion in the sample based on the ease of access" (Kothari, 2004, p. 15). In fact, this study, which is a part of teaching training, takes place in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school situated in Saknia, Kenitra, Morocco. Before it became a high school, it had been two primary schools which were later conjoined in 2008 and named Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi. This high school consists of 36 classrooms. It consists of 35 administrative staff and 70 teachers. Besides, the levels and streams in this high school are as follows: 8 Common Core groups, 5 Arts groups and 3 Science groups; 11 First Year Baccalaureate groups, 6 Arts groups and 5 Science groups; 23 Second Year Baccalaureate groups, 5 Arts groups, 8 Humanities groups, 5 Science groups, and 2 Economics groups. In fact, this research concentrates

on 5 high school EFL teachers and 62 second Baccalaureate students from two streams, namely arts and economics.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The instrumentation used in this research differs from one approach to another. In the qualitative phase, classroom observation and then document analysis are used to collect data about the researched phenomenon. The former according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) state that such data “afford the researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations” (p. 305). It is stated that the observer should bear the following questions in mind: “What should be observed? How should the observations be recorded? Or how the accuracy of observation can be ensured?” (Kothari, 2004, p .96). besides, this study has used a structured observation; that is to say, “the observation is characterised by a careful definition of the units to be observed, the style of recording the observed information, standardised conditions of observation and the selection of pertinent data of observation” (Kothari, 2004, p .96). In fact, a checklist is used to record how writing is taught, and which type and form of teacher written feedback is used in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school. This study also tries to find out which type and form of teacher-written feedback by collecting students’ corrected compositions from the seven EFL teachers at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school. In the quantitative phase, the instrument used is questionnaire. It is distributed to 62 students from different streams. It consists of eight closed questions about the frequency, type and form of teacher written feedback they receive, and their reaction toward it. items in this questionnaire are variegated in terms of scales: 3- point, 4-point and 5-point scales.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

Given the nature of this research, quantitative data (questionnaires) and qualitative data (observation/document analysis) is collected to answer the research questions. Thus; the analysis nature is going to be based on description and quantifying frequencies. Firstly, based on the checklist made for observation, a description of how writing takes place in an EFL classroom in general, and how teacher written feedback is provided to students in particular. Secondly, content analysis methods are used to find out how teachers respond to students’ compositions and what form(s) they adopt. Based on these descriptive findings, we are going to see if they match with the questionnaire administered to 62 second baccalaureate students in order to give an in-depth analysis as regards the researched issue. The questionnaire is going to be interpreted using Microsoft (MS) Excel.

4. Finding and Discussion:

4.1. Findings:

4.1.1. Classroom Observation

The checklist (see appendix C) was used to record how the teacher would normally teach the writing skill in general, and use written feedback to respond to students writing in particular. The first unit of “Ticket to English” textbook is entitled “The gifts of Youth” and the type of writing in this unit is a descriptive one. Students are normally asked to write a paragraph about a famous person. In fact, I recorded the 3 stages of the writing process namely, pre-writing, writing and post-writing. The checklist I used is a 3-point scale: (1) not observed, (2) more emphasis recommended and (3) accomplished very well.

The Pre-Writing Stage

- Item no. 1: According to item one in the checklist, the teacher seems to be aware of the importance of activating students' prior knowledge about the writing topic.
- Item no. 2: it is recorded that the teacher does not stress the importance of considering the target audience. Therefore, such elements are missing in their compositions.
- Item no. 3: It is recorded that the teacher, to some extent, encourages students to work in pairs but not in groups, because the tables are not arranged in a manner which facilitates such practice.
- Item no. 4: it is recorded that the teacher does not provide students with any strategy for generating ideas or organizing them. Such practice is not observed in the pre-writing stage.
- Item no. 5: it is recorded that the teacher does not encourage students to use any visual images such as graphic organizers and webs to organize their ideas.
- Item no. 6: it is recorded that the teacher does integrate the reading skill or allow students to take notes from previous text so they have ample vocabulary (ex: in descriptive writing, students are exposed to a number of adjectives and verbs related to size, height and so forth.) to express themselves freely.
- Item no. 7: it is recorded that the teacher analyses a text model related to the writing topic so as to allow students see how the text is built and organized.

The Writing Stage:

- Item no. 1: According to item one in the checklist, it is recorded that the teacher does lead students into building awareness of discourse organization. He explains how a piece of writing is organized: introduction, body and conclusion.
- Item no. 2: it is recorded that the teacher models how the parts of a text are linked through cohesive devices.
- Item no. 3: it is recorded that the teacher does not illustrate how sentence structure can vary to develop the meaning of students' compositions.
- Item no. 4: it is recorded that the teacher, to a great extent, helps students use correct spelling, punctuation, word form and so forth.
- Item no. 5: it is recorded that does not help students' correct facts and meaning related to the topic.

The Post-Writing Stage:

- Item no. 1: According to item one in the checklist, it is recorded that the teacher does mark areas to be improved in students' compositions.
- Item no. 2: it is recorded that the teacher encourages self-correction by underlining the mistake without providing correction and also encourages peer correction since it creates an interactive atmosphere in the classroom.
- Item no. 3: it is recorded that the teacher uses correction symbols to denote types of errors.
- Item no. 4: it is recorded that the teacher does not use marginal comments and ask the students to locate the errors by oneself.
- Item no. 5: it is recorded that the teacher does not share with students the rubrics used to assess their written work.
- Item no. 6: it is recorded that the teacher often uses form-focused feedback to respond to students' written work.
- Item no. it is recorded that the teacher does not provide content-focused feedback or integrated feedback at all.

4.1.2. Document Analysis:

While analysing the pieces of writing, focus is laid on the types and forms of written feedback which teachers opt for. Five corrected compositions are going to be analysed and described.

Sample 1: Teacher (1) emphasises, to a greater extent, on the composition form. A number of comments addressing accuracy problems permeates the student's composition, and incessant repetition of remarks addressing mechanics of writing make the student's paper look as if it should be rewritten from the topic sentence to concluding sentence. The teacher seems to overcorrect students' papers. For instance, the student writes: "we make fire" which is correct and meaningful; however, the teacher underlines it with no mention of the problem. Besides, the teacher seems to adopt both indirect and direct comments; that is to say, he/she sometimes provides corrections and others he/she underline mistakes. Teacher (1) tends to give both marginal and ends comments. It is deduced that the teacher use, to a great extent, form-based feedback.

Sample 2: Teacher (2) uses form-focused feedback to respond to the student's composition. A number of comments addressing mechanics of writing is formed as end comments. This is somewhat ineffective, because marginal comments tend to be proximate and immediate in a sense that they indicate what the teacher wants to correct immediately. Besides, the teacher seems to correct word by word without looking at the whole sentence. For instance, she changes "are" to "is" and "something" to "things" to stress that the following sentence: "there is things that one must do" is the correct form. It is worth noting that the teacher only crosses out and sometimes provides correction. It is deduced that the teacher does not read the composition as a meaningful whole, but rather as separate segments.

Sample 3: Teacher (3) focuses partially on the composition form. She/he tries to give relatively less comments on form, claiming that too much correction may demotivate students. As a solution, the teacher suggests that it is advisable to mention the mistakes, being overlooked, in class. It is worth noting that correction symbols permeate the text. Besides, the teacher uses only end comments to provide feedback.

Sample 4: The teacher (4) opts for form-focused feedback to respond to the student's composition. He/she uses a number of correction symbols as a form to respond to students writing; no marginal or end comments is used. In fact, the teacher uses confusing symbols and unclear handwriting, which would definitely be difficult for students to understand. It is worth noting that the teacher is distracted by accuracy problems, forgetting that there are content problems which could be pointed out. For instance, the student writes "in the camping must wear my jeans and I go to shopping with my brother" here the teacher should have asked the student to focus only on camping and suggest some ideas so as to help the student write a meaningful text. In fact, sometimes teachers do not pay heed to content problems.

Sample 5: The teacher (5) excessively focuses on the composition form. Several comments addressing accuracy problems permeate the student's composition, and incessant repetition of remarks addressing mechanics of writing may distort the student's initial sequencing of ideas. The teacher (5) adopts direct comments; that is to say, he/she sometimes provides correction. It is worth noting that the teacher (5) tends to give only end comments, summarizing the type of mistakes the student has made.

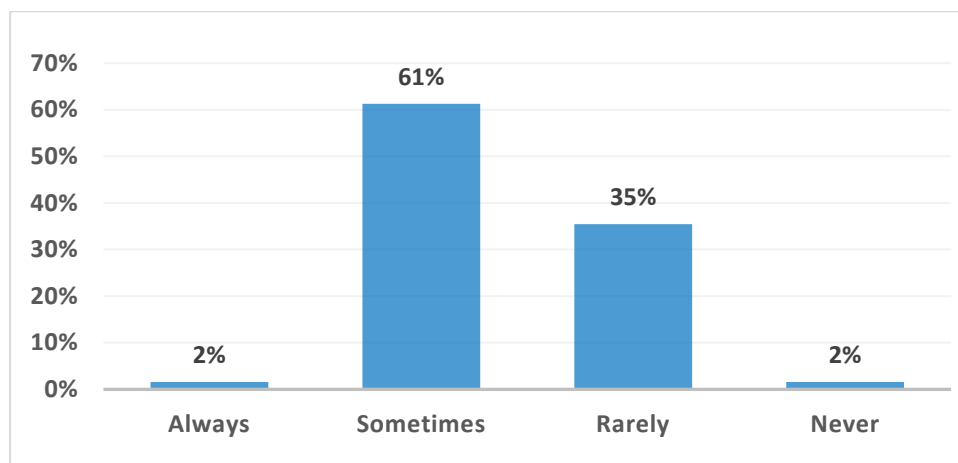
4.1.3. Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire distributed to 62 Second Baccalaureate students is going to be presented in tables, graphs and comments.

Question 1: How do you often receive written feedback from teachers?

Options	Response	Percentage
Always	1	2%
Sometimes	38	61%
Rarely	22	35%
Never	1	2%

Table 1 The amount of time students receive teacher written feedback



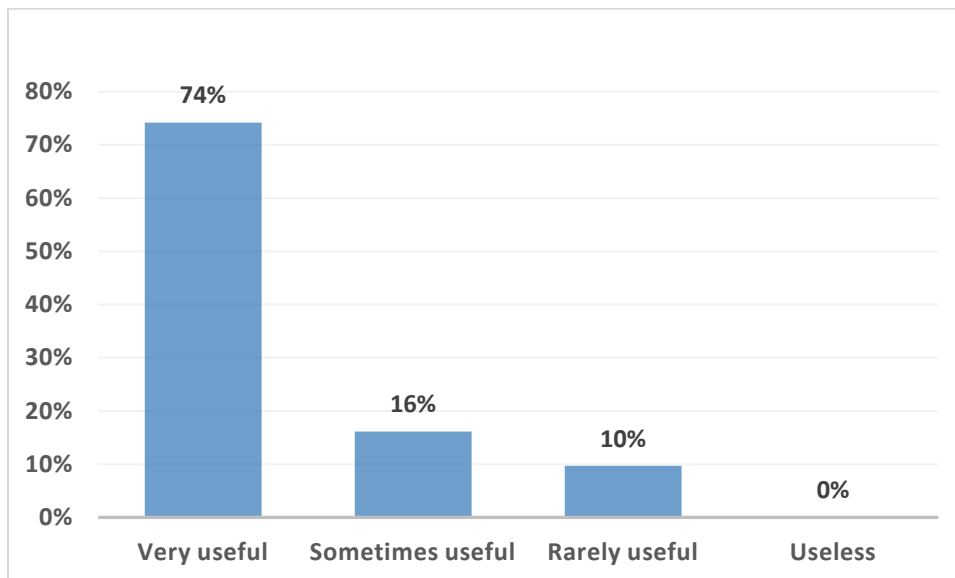
Graph 1 The amount of time students receive teacher written feedback

The two highest proportion 61% and 35% of the surveyed students, reflect that their teachers sometimes or rarely provide written feedback. Whilst only 2% say their teachers always or never provide written feedback.

Question 2: How useful is written feedback in improving your writing?

Options	Response	Percentage
Very Useful	46	74%
Sometimes Useful	10	16%
Rarely Useful	6	10%
Useless	0	0%

Table 2 The usefulness of teacher written feedback



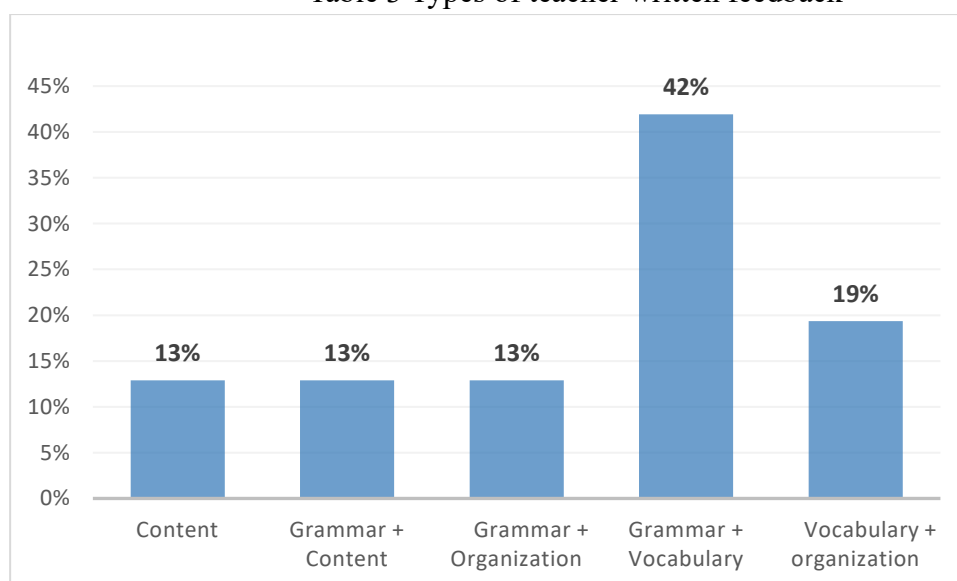
Graph 2 The usefulness of teacher written feedback

The highest proportion 74% representing the surveyed students’ responses as to whether they think teacher written feedback is useful to improve their writing, reflects the very high degree of the students’ belief in the usefulness of teaching written feedback. Only 16% of students believe that it is sometimes useful and 10% believe it is rarely useful. It is worth noting that 0% of the surveyed students believe that it is useless.

Question 3: What is important for your teacher?

Options	Number of Responses	Percentage
Content	8	13%
Grammar + Content	8	13%
Grammar + Organization	8	13%
Grammar + Vocabulary	26	42%
Vocabulary + Organization	12	19%

Table 3 Types of teacher written feedback



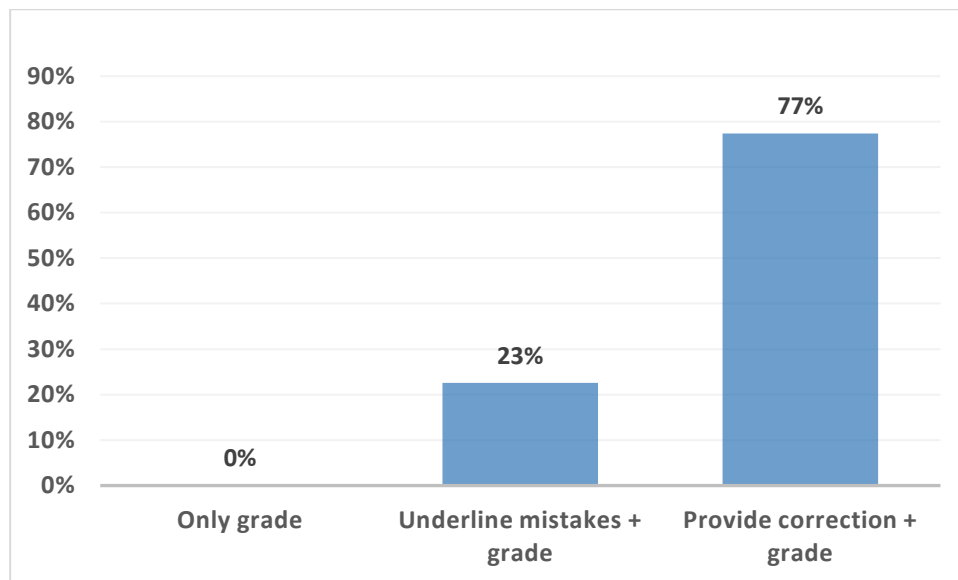
Graph 3 Types of teacher written feedback

The two highest proportions 42% and 19 representing the surveyed students, reflect that teachers focus on form-based feedback (grammar + vocabulary) and (vocabulary and organization). The second two highest proportions 13% go to content-focused feedback (content) and integrated feedback (grammar + content). It is worth noting that content-focused and integrated feedback is equal in terms of responses. Another aspect of form-focused feedback (grammar + organization) gains 13% of students' responses.

Question 5: What do you want your teacher to provide?

Options	Number of Responses	Percentage
Only grade	0	0%
Grade + Underline mistakes	14	23%
Grade + providing correction	48	77%

Table 4 Students' preference to teacher written feedback



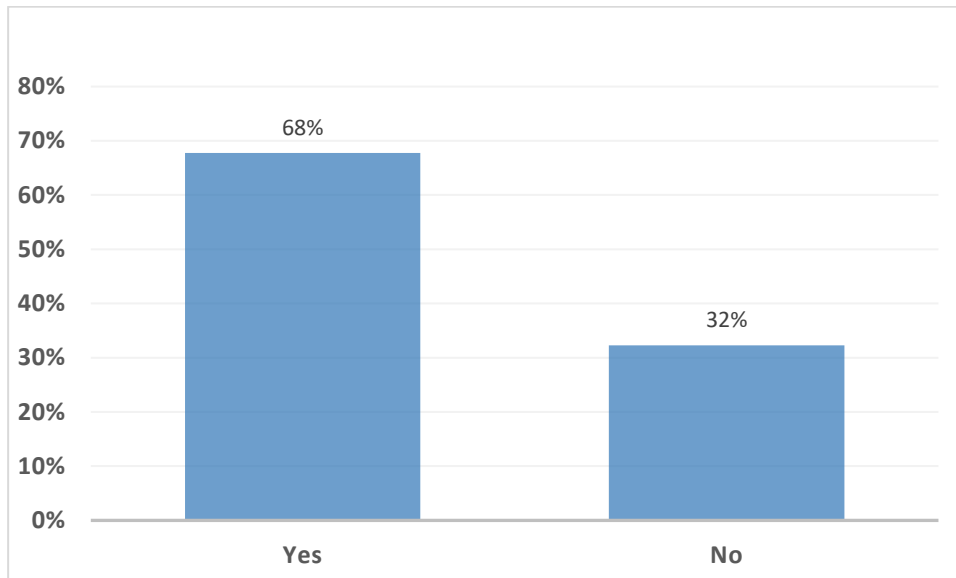
Graph 4 Students' preference to teacher written feedback

The highest proportion 77% representing the surveyed students' responses as to whether they prefer grade, underline mistake (indirect feedback) + grade or providing correction + grade, reflect that students highly prefer direct feedback and only 23 % of the surveyed students prefer indirect feedback. In fact, according to the questionnaire, none of the students prefer grades alone.

Question 5: Does it demotivate you to have all your mistakes corrected by your teacher?

Options	Number of Response	Percentage
Yes	42	68%
No	20	32%

Table 5 Students' attitudes towards overcorrection

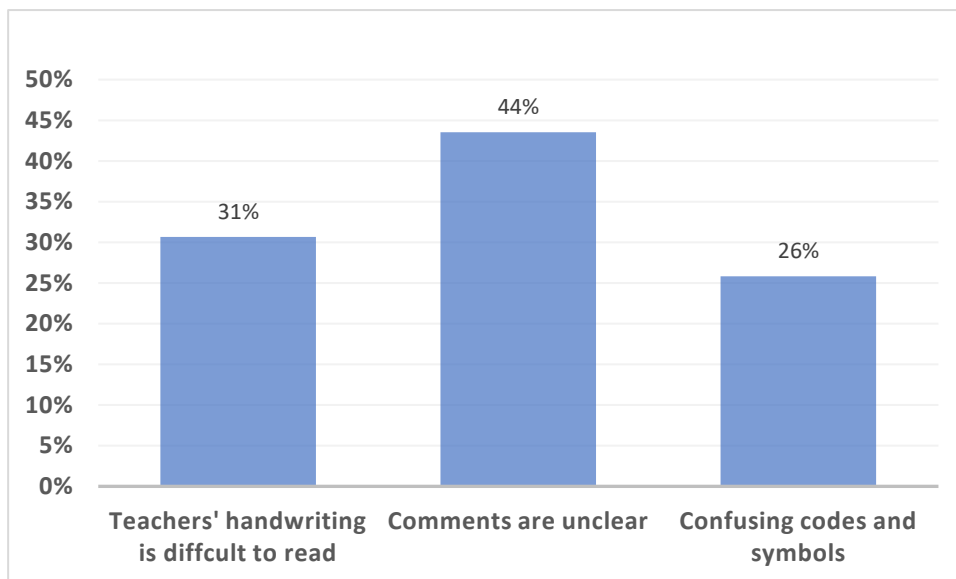


Graph 5 Students' attitudes towards overcorrection

The highest proportion 74% representing the surveyed students’ responses as to whether too much correction is demotivation, reflect that they feel that it is demotivating to see the red colour permeating their compositions. In fact, only 32% of them say no to the question presented.

Options	Number of Response	Percentage
Teachers’ handwriting is difficult to read	19	31%
Comments unclear	27	44%
Confusing codes and symbols	16	26%

Table 6 Forms of teacher written feedback



Graph 6 Forms of teacher written feedback

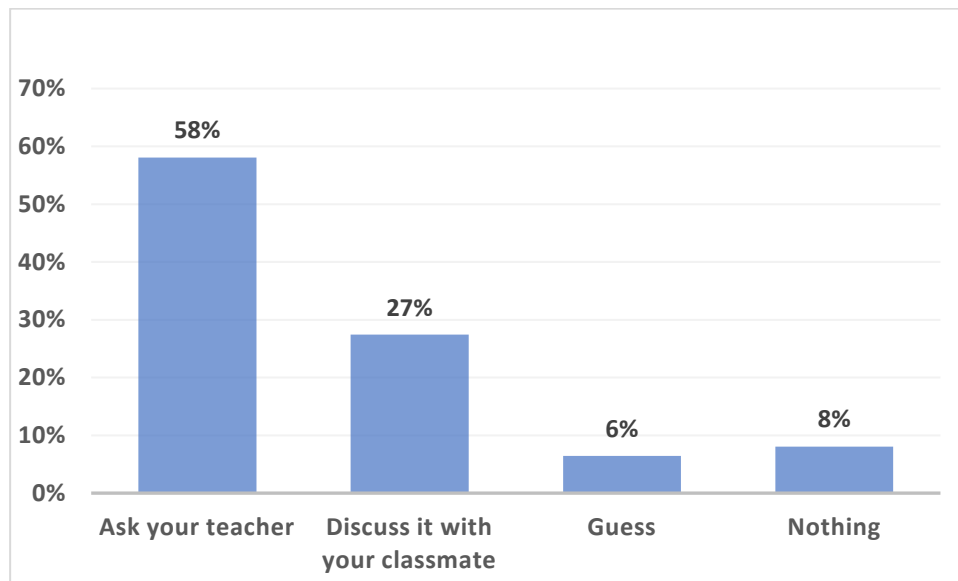
The highest proportion 44% representing the surveyed students’ responses as to why they do not understand teachers’ feedback, reflect that students do not understand teachers’ comments in general. 31% of the

surveyed students’ say that they find difficulty understanding teachers’ handwriting and 26% of them say that teachers use confusing symbols and codes.

Question 7: When you do not understand your teacher’s feedback, what do you do?

Options	Number of Response	Percentage
Ask your teacher	36	58%
Discuss it with your classmate	17	27%
Guess	4	6%
Nothing	5	8%

Table 7 Students’ reactions to teacher written feedback



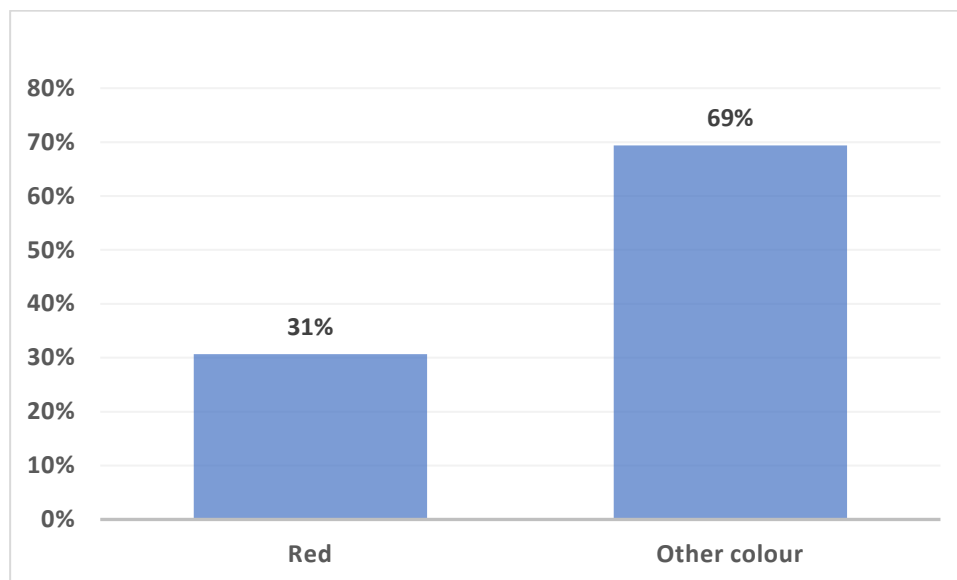
Graph 7 Students’ reactions to teacher written feedback

The highest proportion 58% representing the surveyed students’ responses as to what they normally resort to when they find difficulty understanding teachers’ feedback, reflect that they mostly tend to ask the teacher personally. 27 % of the surveyed students tend to do peer-correction, 8% do nothing at all, and 6% only guess what the comments mean.

Question 8: What colour do you prefer to see in your paper?

Options	Number of Response	Percentage
Red	19	31%
Other Colour	43	69%

Table 8 Students ‘preference to attribute of correction



Graph 8 Students 'preference to attribute of correction

The highest proportion 69% representing the surveyed students' responses as to what colour they prefer to see in their papers, reflect that students believe that the red colour is very demotivating and daunting, for this reason only 31% of them prefer red colour.

4.2. Discussion

The present research gives an idea about the types and forms of teacher written feedback employed by Moroccan high school EFL teachers. In this section, the results in the present, including classroom observation, Students' corrected compositions and students' questionnaire, is going to be discussed using descriptive statistics. It is worth restating the research questions of this study.

- Which types of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers employ to respond to students' compositions?

Before starting the discussion of the results of classroom observation, corrected samples of students' compositions and students' questionnaire, it is significant to laconically summarise what the literature review has concluded as far as teacher written feedback is concerned. In fact, it has shown that there are alternatives to form focused feedback, namely content-focused feedback and integrated feedback. The latter is deemed the most effective since it focuses on both aspects: form and content.

The question above is to shed light on the types of teacher written feedback used in a Moroccan EFL classroom. Throughout the results of the field work (classroom observation, corrected samples of students' compositions, and students' questionnaire) it can be asserted that Moroccan high school EFL teachers use form-focused feedback to respond to their students' writing. In other words, the different instruments used to collect data have come up with the following statement: Moroccan high school EFL teachers focus solely on the students writing, neglecting its content. It is worth stressing that students are also aware of the fact that their teachers exceedingly focus on grammar and vocabulary; this has been deduced from the questionnaire distributed to students at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school.

- Which forms of written feedback do Moroccan high school EFL teachers' employ to respond to students' compositions?

The question above is to ascertain the forms teacher-written feedback used in a Moroccan EFL classroom. Throughout the results of the field work (classroom observation, corrected samples of students' compositions, and students' questionnaire), it can be asserted that teachers mostly use commentary and correction symbols to respond to students' compositions. To put it differently, teachers use marginal and end comments, which tend to be either direct or indirect comments, they also use correction symbols and codes to respond to students' compositions. It is worth noting that students prefer direct comments which tend to locate their mistakes rather than indirect ones which tend to be ambiguous to them. Similarly, according to the questionnaire distributed to students at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school, students find correction symbols unclear, and believe that the quality teacher's handwriting is significant as far as teacher written comments is concerned. In addition, according to the observation checklist, teachers do not provide students with rubrics; thus, the students may not have the slightest idea how their written work is assessed. Besides, teachers should use ICT to give students feedback. In fact, the English textbook "Ticket to English" includes email writing; therefore, it would be beneficial to use information and communication technologies ICT as a platform to show students how to practice email writing on the one hand, and also use it to respond to students writing, on the other.

5. Conclusion

Generally, the present study accepts the hypothesis stated at the introduction. It is concluded that EFL teachers at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school so heavily use form-focused feedback to respond to their students' compositions. It also sheds light on the form of teacher written feedback, and concludes that EFL teachers at the aforementioned high school use different forms namely, correction symbols, commentary, but never make use of other forms such as electronic feedback and rubrics. To sum up, it seems that writing never floats free from teacher written feedback, thus, teachers should attend to the types of written feedback they adopt.

5.1. Limitations of the study

Although this research has reached its aims, there were some unguishable limitations. Firstly, the time of the training was not appropriate to collect data, since teachers had not done any writing task before. In fact, the host teacher started writing after two weeks of the training. Secondly, this study involved only 5 teachers and 62 students (Arts and Economics students) from Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi high school. In fact, it would not be plausible to generalise the findings of this paper on all Moroccan high school EFL teachers. Finally, this paper would have been better if it had tested the most effective teacher written feedback and proposed a treatment regarding the researched phenomenon.

5.2. Recommendations for Further Research

On the basis of the finding and conclusions of this study, the following recommendation are sketched out below:

- In-depth investigation of the effectiveness of integrated feedback (form and content);
- Thorough investigation of the effectiveness of electronic feedback (social media, emails, and so forth);
- Expanding the scope of investigation: involving a larger number of teachers and students in future research;
- The field work should be done in the first months of the second semester so as students are acquainted with teacher written feedback.

5.3. Pedagogical Implications

There is a need for interested teachers to ascertain the most effective type of written feedback and identify which one works better. As stated in the literature review above, there is no harm if teachers provide form-based feedback and content-based feedback. In this case, students can be able to write accurate and meaningful compositions. Besides, teacher written feedback can be more effective if it is delivered through electronic media; such provides teachers with avant-garde, comprehensive and effective ways of responding to students' written work.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Writing Rubrics

Name	Title	Group					
Content	Excellent	VG	Good	S	Weak	Unacceptable	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The piece is engaging and alive • It contains valuable information and insights • Writer shows good understanding of topic • Details are clear and helpful • Voice of narrator is honest and convincing 							
<p>Reader Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The piece has clear organization • Writer relates topic to reader's knowledge • Effective lead, engaging the reader • Satisfying ending • Clear transitions and signposts 							
<p>Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is clear and precise • Sentences are varied and effective • Unnecessary words are eliminated • Style is consistent and appropriate 							
<p>Mechanics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar • Spelling • Punctuation • Proofreading 							
<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation (double-spacing, legibility) • Effective revision • Peer response and self-evaluation • Paper is on time 							
Your Strengths:	Possible Improvements:					Grade:	

Appendix B: Correction Symbols

Meaning	Incorrect	Correct
<i>P.</i> punctuation	I live ^{P.} and go to school here ^{P.} Where do you work ^{P.}	I live and go to school here. Where do you work?
<i>O</i> word missing	I working ^O in a restaurant.	I am working in a restaurant.
<i>Cap.</i> capitalization	It is located at main and baker ^{cap.} streets in the City ^{cap.}	It is located at Main and Baker Streets in the city.
<i>V.t.</i> verb tense	I never <u>work</u> ^{v.t.} as a cashier until I <u>get</u> ^{v.t.} a job there.	I had never worked as a cashier until I got a job there.
<i>agr.</i> subject-verb agreement	The manager <u>work</u> ^{agr.} hard. There <u>is</u> ^{agr.} five employees.	The manager works hard. There are five employees.
<i>C</i> make one word or sentence	Every <u>one</u> works hard. We work together. So we have become friends.	Everyone works hard. We work together, so we have become friends.
<i>sp.</i> spelling	The <u>maneger</u> ^{sp.} is a woman.	The manager is a woman.
<i>pl.</i> plural	She treats her employees like <u>slave</u> ^{pl.} .	She treats her employees like slaves.
<i>Ø</i> unnecessary word	My boss she watches everyone all the time.	My boss watches everyone all the time.
<i>w.f.</i> wrong word form	Her voice is <u>irritated</u> ^{w.f.} .	Her voice is irritating.
<i>w.w.</i> wrong word	The food is delicious. <u>Besides</u> ^{w.w.} , the restaurant is always crowded.	The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded.
<i>ref.</i> pronoun reference error	The restaurant's specialty is fish. <u>They</u> ^{ref.} are always fresh. The food is delicious. Therefore, it is always crowded.	The restaurant's specialty is fish. It is always fresh. The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded.

W	wrong word order	Friday <u>always is</u> our busiest night.	Friday is always our busiest night.
RO	run-on	Lily was fired she is upset.	Lily was fired, so she is upset.
OR	OR		Lily was fired; therefore, she is upset.
CS	comma splice (incorrectly joined independent clauses)	Lily was fired, she is upset.	Because Lily was fired, she is upset. Lily is upset because she was fired.
FRAG	fragment (incomplete sentence)	She was fired. <u>Because she was always late.</u>	She was fired because she was always late.
T	add a transition	She was also careless. She frequently spilled coffee on the table.	She was also careless. For example, she frequently spilled coffee on the table.
S.	subject	<u>It</u> is open from 6:00 PM until the last customer leaves.	The restaurant is open from 6:00 PM until the last customer leaves.
v.	verb	The employees <u>are</u> on time and work hard.	The employees are on time and work hard.
prep.	preposition	We start serving dinner <u>at</u> 6:00 PM.	We start serving dinner at 6:00 PM.
conj.	conjunction	The garlic shrimp, fried clams, and broiled lobster are the most popular dishes.	The garlic shrimp, fried clams, and broiled lobster are the most popular dishes.
art.	article	Diners expect <u>a</u> glass of water when they first sit down <u>at</u> table.	Diners expect a glass of water when they first sit down at the table.
¶	Symbol for a paragraph		

Appendix C: Observation Checklist

Observation Checklist

Class: 2nd B.C.E

Date: 28/10/2015

1= Not observed

2= More emphasis recommended

3= Accomplished very well

Items for Observation	1	2	3
I-The Pre-writing Stage			
1-Teacher (T, henceforth) activates students' prior knowledge about the writing topic.	1	2	3
2- T helps students (ss, henceforth) to develop a sense of audience.	1	2	3
3-T encourages Ss to work in pairs and / or groups	1	2	3
4- T provide ss. with strategies for generating ideas through, organizing them and planning.	1	2	3
5- T encourages Ss to use visual and sensory images such as graphic organizers and webs to organize main ideas and supporting or related ideas	1	2	3
6- T enables Ss to collect information from reading, taking notes ..etc	1	2	3
7-T helps Ss analyze a model text related to the writing topic.	1	2	3
II-The Writing Stage			
1-T lead ss. into building awareness of discourse organization	1	2	3
2-T models how the parts of a text are linked through cohesive devices	1	2	3
3-T illustrates how sentence structure can vary to develop meaning.	1	2	3
4-T helps Ss use correct punctuation, word form, structuresetc.	1	2	3
5-T helps ss correct facts and meaning of the topic	1	2	3
III-The Post Writing Skills			
1-When assessing Ss' work, T marks areas for improvement	1	2	3

2-T uses encourages self and peer correction.	1	2	3
3-T locates errors and gives them symbols to denote types of errors (using a coding system)	1	2	3
4-T indicates in the margin that there is an error of a particular kind somewhere on that line and asks Ss. to locate it and correct it	1	2	3
5-T shares with Ss. the grading criteria that is to be used to assess their written work.	1	2	3
6-T provides form-focused feedback	1	2	3
7-T provides content-focused or integrated feedback.	1	2	3