Exploring Novice And Experienced Teachers' Beliefs And Practices Of Written Feedback

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Abstract

This study explored written feedback beliefs and practices and their underlying factors from one novice and one experienced ESL teacher. The study adopted a case study approach. Data were collected over 15 weeks through two semi-structured interviews, three stimulated recall interviews based on three sets of student writing analyses, and three classroom observations. Ten student portfolios, including each teacher's written feedback practices over a semester, were also examined. Teachers' written feedback on the student writing was grouped based on the scheme by Ferris (2007). The analyses revealed that both participants opted to provide written feedback for several reasons. Additionally, both teachers gave comprehensive corrective written feedback throughout the term for a variety of reasons. The most salient motives behind the practices and beliefs were: i teachers' attitudes towards writing and errors, and the roles of teacher and students in writing; ii pre-service teacher education and experience; and iii school policies.

Suggested Citation

Mesleğe Yeni Başlamış Ve Meslekte Deneyimli İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Geri Bildirim Hakkındaki Düşünceleri Ve Uygulamalarının İncelenmesi

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Öz

Bu çalışma, bir meslekte deneyimli ve bir mesleğe yeni başlamış öğretmenin geri bildirim uygulamaları hakkındaki deneyim ve gözlemlenebilir düşünceleri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek, geri bildirim uygulamaları ardındaki sebeplerini analiz etmek için gerçekleştirildi. Bu çalışmada örnek durum inceleme metodu benimsendi. Veri, 15 haftalık bir zamanda, öğrencilerin yazıları üzerindeki geri bildirim analizlerine dayandırılan anımsamayı sağlayan görüşmeler (3 kez), yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler (2 kez), ve ders gözlemleri (3 kez) ile toplanmıştır. Ayrıca, her bir öğretmenin bir dönem boyunca vermiş olduğu geri bildirimi içeren 10'ar öğrenci portfolyo incelemesi de yapıldı. Portfolyolar Ferris (2007) tarafından önerilen analiz sekline göre değerlendirilmiştir. Sonuçlar yeni ve deneyimli öğretmenin çeşitli sebeplerden dolayı geri bildirimin verilmesi gerektiği görüşünü ortaya çıkardı. Ek olarak, öğretmenlerin dönem boyunca geri bildirim verirken ana odak noktalarının bazı sebeplerden dolayı gramer olduğu görüldü. Öğretmenlerin geri bildirim uygulamaları arkasındaki sebeplerin; i öğretmenlerin yazıya ve hatalara karşı olan tutumları ve öğrenci ile kendilerinin yazıdaki rolleri, ii aldıkları eğitim ile deneyim ve iii kurumun yaptırımları olduğu bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazı, öğretmen inanışları, yazılı geri bildirim.

Önerilen Atıf

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction[1]

Since written feedback is "widely seen as crucial for encouraging and consolidating learning, and this significance has also been recognised by those working in the field of second language (L2) writing" there are quite a few studies which have analysed it from a variety of angles (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 83). These have been teacher beliefs about written feedback (e.g. Evans et al., 2010; Ferris, 2011, Lee, 2003; Orsmond & Merry, 2011), the impact of pre-service teacher education (e.g. Hirvela & Belcher, 2007; Hochstetler, 2007; Lee, 2008, 2010) and institutional practices (e.g. Lee, 2011; Bailey & Garner, 2010). In addition, although some studies have asserted that written feedback is ineffective and should therefore be abandoned (Fazio, 2001; Truscott, 2007), others have demonstrated its efficiency and suggested that it be applied (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2007). However, regarding the possible impact of experience, very few, if any, studies in the current literature have investigated what experienced and novice writing teachers do concerning written feedback and the possible sources behind their practices. Furthermore, there seems to be a gap in the current literature regarding the methodology used to investigate teacher beliefs, and the practices and sources behind teachers' beliefs from a holistic viewpoint since the most frequently used methodologies so far have been questionnaires and interviews. In addition, although some studies have analysed teacher feedback (e.g. Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Stern & Solomon, 2006), very few, if any, studies have investigated teacher feedback on student papers throughout a semester and whether there are any changes in their practices over time.

The present study, therefore, aims to enhance the understanding of teacher beliefs about written feedback, and to reveal their practices and the factors influencing their beliefs and practices by investigating the possible impacts of institutional policies, teacher education programs and experience. We adopted a case study technique using semi-structured interviews, class observations, written feedback analysis, interviews with stimulated recall sessions and a detailed student portfolio analysis in order to contribute to the literature with a more comprehensive study design as a "case study research is richly descriptive because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information" (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006, p.16).

Literature Review
Research on teacher cognition regarding written feedback
It is a fact that what teachers believe, think and know has a direct impact on their teaching and practices as "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). There has therefore been a surge of interest in examining teacher beliefs and attitudes from a variety of angles, as has been discussed extensively by Borg (2006). However, teacher cognition on providing written feedback is a hitherto under-researched issue, even though these beliefs and attitudes actually play a crucial role in writing. In other words, as teachers are not merely passive "implementers" of written feedback theories or "apprentice[s] of observation", what they consider to be correct and important and thus prioritize should also be worth investigating (Lortie, 1975, p. 61). Among the outstanding studies which have focused on teacher cognition on error correction was that of Lee (2003). The findings show a tension between teachers' beliefs and their practices, and also the participants did not feel prepared to respond using selective feedback. These findings were later reflected in a study by Montgomery and Baker (2007) in which teachers' beliefs in an intensive English program in a US university were compared with teachers' actual feedback practices. The results revealed that grammar and mechanics were the focus of the teachers, which indicated that their self-reported feedback practices differed from their actual practice. Additionally, teachers were observed to disregard the suggestions on best practices given by their supervisors and continued with their own practices. Diab (2005), however, explored teachers' and students' beliefs about responding to ESL writing using think-aloud protocols and semi-structured interviews. A university-level ESL instructor and two of her students participated in that case study. The findings indicated that although the teacher agreed that writing teachers should provide feedback on content rather than on form and use alternative feedback methods to the traditional ones, she still insisted on error correction as a "security blanket", which students agreed with.

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[1] This article is a part of the first author's unpublished MA thesis from Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus.

Li (2012) analysed the beliefs and practices of 16 New Zealand university teachers using a preliminary survey, a think-aloud protocol, individual interviews, stimulated recall discussions and focus group discussions. The findings showed that teachers' beliefs were affected by the work context and by their emotions and experiences, with convergences and divergences between their beliefs and practices. Similarly, Ferris (2014) investigated the reasons behind teachers' feedback practices and the sources behind the reasons together with their actual feedback practices. She surveyed 129 and interviewed 23 community college and university writing instructors and also analysed sample student papers of those teachers. The findings showed that the teachers used "flexible response strategies that fit the student and the task rather than following rigid prescriptions", which was in line with what they considered to be important when responding (p. 21).

Sources behind teachers' beliefs and practices

Sources behind teachers' practices, i.e. the influences on teachers' practices, which has to do with "teacher preparation, personal language learning experiences, individual teaching experiences, and various institutional or contextual constraints" as was revealed in some studies have also received scant attention so far (Hartshorn et al., 2014, p. 255). In one such study, using feedback and interview data, Lee (2011) found that teachers provided feedback on all errors in students' writing because it was the school's policy to do so. Similarly, Bailey and Garner (2010) found that because of the need to "conform to the institutional requirements, procedures and priorities", teachers had to adjust their feedback (p. 195). In similar vein, Paiva (2011) found that beliefs, experiences, educational background and contextual factors shaped the teachers' instructional decisions in writing. In addition to institutional policies, the (lack of) pre-service education on written feedback has been found to influence teachers' written feedback practices (Ferris, 2011; Lee, 2008, 2010). Hence, the sources lying behind teachers' written feedback practices need to be analysed as they exert a profound influence on practices and thus affect the whole process of teaching and learning. A more recent study by Hartshorn et al., (2014) was conducted with over 1000 ESL/EFL writing teachers in 69 different nations using an electronic survey. They aimed to better understand the variables that may shape practitioners' choices about corrective feedback designed to improve the linguistic accuracy of student writing, CFLA (referred to as comprehensive corrective written feedback here). Overall, the findings revealed that " teacher views and applications of CFLA may be tied to practitioners' perceptions of student needs rather than to specific learner factors" (p. 273). Moreover, not only institutional contexts but also teachers' formal education can have an impact on this process.

Another study looking into what shapes practitioners' practices and whether these practices align with students' preferences was carried out by Alshahrani and Storch, (2014). However, similar to the present study, their study was done at a university where a strict guideline should be followed while providing written feedback. Results showed that teachers obeyed the rules by providing comprehensive indirect feedback though this did not always match their beliefs. Teachers were not aware of students' preferences, either. Still, it was found out that "culturally and historically entrenched expectations, norms and authority relations play a significant role in situating and shaping teachers' feedback practices" (p. 115).

In the light of the studies briefly described above, the present study set out to investigate the following questions:

1. What beliefs do experienced and novice writing teachers in the preparatory school of a private university hold about written feedback on learners' writings?
2. How do novice and experienced teachers in a private preparatory school respond to student writing?
3. What factors influence university preparatory school writing teachers' feedback practices?

Purpose

The present study set out to investigate the beliefs novice and experienced writing teachers hold about written feedback on learners' writings, the way they respond to students' writings and the influences behind their feedback practices by adopting a case study research involving semi-structured interviews, class observations, written feedback analysis, interviews with stimulated recall sessions and a detailed student portfolio analysis.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology which enabled a detailed investigation of teachers' perceptions, beliefs, motives and practices concerning written feedback in a natural context. Such a methodology helps a researcher to "gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events and can provide a more complete picture since many sources of evidence were used" (Noor, 2008, p. 1603).

Context of the study

The study was conducted with one novice female teacher and one experienced female teacher who both held a BA degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) and who were both teaching students with a beginner level of proficiency at the time of the study. The participants (NP for the novice participant, and EP for the experienced participant as they wished) were chosen after a bio-data questionnaire had been administered to all the staff in the department. The EP had over twenty years of experience of teaching in a number of universities in Turkey, Cyprus and Germany. She taught all the skills at different levels. The NP, on the other hand, had been teaching for only two months when the study was conducted, which served the study purposes very well.

The study was carried out at a university in Northern Cyprus, where the medium of instruction is English and process writing is applied. Here, having been provided with grammar input, students write a first draft in the class and a second one outside class by referring to a self-checklist. Teachers give written feedback on the second drafts using a coding system as part of the school policy. The students then write a final draft and teachers use direct feedback, which is also what the school policy requires. Students are required to keep their writings in a portfolio which is regularly evaluated.

Data collection

To ensure "that the issue is not explored through one lens", various data collection instruments were used (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Semi-structured interviews (SSI) were used at the beginning and end of the study to generate data about the novice and experienced teachers' cognition and practices in giving written feedback, to explore the motives behind their beliefs and to form the base for the stimulated recall interviews (SRI). Because they are "empirically rigorous introspection data collection" tools, SRIs were also conducted three times at specific intervals with each teacher (Henderson et al., 2010, p. 3). To enable the teachers to relive their thoughts and aims when giving written feedback, and to collect "live data from live situations" for the SRIs, feedback analyses and classroom observations were conducted (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 305). Written feedback analysis was repeated three times during the study, immediately before the SRIs with five randomly chosen writings of each teacher's students. Teachers' feedback on the papers was used to generate questions. Moreover, because what teachers do is not confined to their feedback practices, three class observations were carried out to exemplify and reflect the practices of the teachers in a natural environment, and most importantly to reduce the possibility of guessing and responding in line with the study goals. Last, 10 student portfolios of each teacher were selected randomly and all the written feedback they had provided on the second and final drafts of these portfolios was analyzed according to the scheme suggested by Ferris[2] (2007). Teachers provided written feedback on the same tasks which had a certain word limit stated in the instruction. The purpose for using this model was that it is an invaluable tool to answer the question how the novice and experienced teachers in the study respond to student writing.

Data Analysis

Each stimulated recall (SRI) and semi-structured interview (SSI) session were recorded, and immediately afterwards, these sessions were transcribed and, together with the audio recordings, filed under each teacher's name. After the transcription stage, iterative reading of and reflection on the transcripts were done. At that stage, follow-up interviews with the teachers were carried out to eliminate some unclear sections. The data containing SSIs and SRIs were then transferred to MAXQDA (Qualitative Data Analysis Software) for initial coding. When the coding process was completed, the codes were hierarchically grouped into categories. The coding processes were double-checked by a third rater who was a native English speaker after he was informed about the nature of the study and, there were no discrepancies in the ratings except for a few cases where five themes were under different categories, which were discussed and resolved together. Lastly, all the written feedback teachers had given on the students' portfolios was analyzed following the steps and scheme in Ferris (2007).

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[2] This teacher response analysis model is used to categorize written comments in term of their aim and linguistic features, which would enable teachers to reflect on their written feedback practices.

Findings

Teachers' beliefs regarding written feedback
Beliefs regarding the purpose of written feedback and the teacher's role in writing

From her considerable experience of teaching, the EP considered written feedback to have "a big role" in writing (SSI-1). It functioned for her as a tool to show how much she cared about her students, and to strengthen her relationship and communication with them, which in return would lead to improvements in their writing (SRI-1). She also used written feedback to improve students' language skills, and to show their strengths and weaknesses before an exam as "written feedback is 100% exam-oriented" (SRI-2). In other words, written feedback is regarded as a tool to help students get high grades from the writing sections of the exams. Although she was not sure about the permanency of written feedback like the experienced teacher in Alshahrani and Storch's study (2014), she believed her written feedback practices were effective when students applied them correctly. She emphasized that providing feedback and equal feedback opportunities to every student was a teacher's duty and that to do otherwise would be unethical for a teacher. The NP, similarly, stated that the purpose of written feedback is to bring students to a better level, to make them realize that everything – grammar, content, vocabulary – is important when writing and to show each student that "s/he has progressed a lot from the first draft to the final" and that she, as a teacher, "just put the codes, and that is [their] success" (NP, SSI-1). Unlike the EP, the NP gave another purpose, which was to teach students the natural and acceptable use of language, and she thought she was the only person to make the student realize this. She saw written feedback as an investment in students to correct and prevent the occurrence of errors, which, like the EP, she considered to be an undesirable part of language learning. Interestingly, she approached written feedback as a tool for improving herself as a teacher in providing feedback as she did not feel comfortable about providing written feedback. She also used written feedback to communicate with her students to some extent.

So both teachers considered that written feedback improves student proficiency and accuracy in writing, and therefore has a place in the teaching of writing, which is contrary to the arguments put forward by Fazio (2001), Polio et al. (1998) and Truscott (1996, 2007). Both teachers agreed that written feedback "allows for a level of individualized attention and one-on-one communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of a class" (Ferris et al., 1997, p. 155). Similarly, they agreed that student failure in writing was not their responsibility. However, while the EP emphasized the exam function of written feedback, the NP focused on its function to teach authentic use of English and improve herself in providing it.

Beliefs concerning the effectiveness of written feedback

Although teachers were asked to express their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of written feedback in general, the answers were mainly about written corrective feedback. So both the EP and the NP believed that their written feedback was effective and in cases where it was not, the students were the ones to be blamed. They supported their argument by referring to the decrease in the number of grammatical errors between the second and the final drafts, confirming Zamel's (1985) statement that "ESL teachers, like their native-language counterparts, rarely seem to expect students to revise the text beyond the surface level" (p. 79). As for comprehensive or unfocused corrective written feedback where all grammatical errors are corrected, the EP stated that it works as long as students try to benefit from it and she "corrected all errors" at high levels but only the familiar ones at lower levels. That is, depending on what students had been taught that far, she reported giving written feedback accordingly. For instance, if students made article mistakes in the drafts and they had not studied articles yet, then she would not correct them. However, the analysis of the ten student portfolios revealed that she corrected each error on the second and final drafts of the students' paragraphs starting from the first writing handout. "Despite not believing in its [comprehensive written corrective feedback] efficiency" and "not [being] comfortable with correcting the mistakes", the NP corrected every error in the second and final drafts in the first two spans but subsequently claimed to have stopped the practice, and she explained this change as follows:

> Not each and every error in writing. The big mistakes like wrong usage of linkers or very obvious grammar mistakes, but not article mistakes or preposition mistakes all the time if it is not very important again. (NP, SRI-3)

As for the teachers' preferences between written and oral feedback, the EP thought that written and oral feedback should be utilized together whenever necessary. The NP, on the other hand, stated that if the feedback is written on the paper, "they know that they have to correct their mistakes and they will be graded for this, so she thought written feedback is more effective and more meaningful for them.

Both teachers agreed that written corrective feedback would be a waste of time when a paper is full of errors or when students cannot understand their comments. Thus, oral feedback works best in such cases, as stated in the following comment:

> If there are not many mistakes, written feedback is more practical. ... but if it is a paper like this with many grammar mistakes, no appropriate sentences or words, oral feedback is easier. Maybe it is not an exact solution but it [oral feedback] may help better and it [written feedback] is also a burden for the teacher. What if I have six students like this and if I had to correct each and every mistake in the paragraphs in every draft? (NP, SRI-3)

So they both used oral feedback to lighten the burden which written feedback creates on them as written feedback is a "time consuming endeavor" (Ferris et al., 2011, p. 41). However, throughout the term, the teachers asked very few students to come and see them in the office for oral feedback even though there were quite a few papers full of corrections. Moreover, although the NP was seen to make many oral comments personally during the class observations, she mentioned not writing any on the students' papers as this would cause misunderstandings or resentment. Obviously, codes were not counted as comments.

Beliefs on written comments and their effectiveness

The teachers both agreed that comments are beneficial for students but that they should be moderate in severity. The EP stated that comments should point out not only weaknesses but also strengths. Moreover, for her, negative comments should come after positive ones in order to motivate students, which she explained as being the result of the theories which she had read about during her undergraduate studies. However, she stated that she received very little direct instruction on responding to writing and error correction in particular as follows:

> We did not actually receive any training. I do not remember receiving any particular courses on error correction. Of course, we always had the theory from methodology books and methods and approaches and ... the classical approaches and how they approach this problem of error correction. Errors should be corrected or else they become habits and are fossilized. That is all we learned when we were at university. (EP, SSI-1)

She also emphasized that comments should be specific, personalized and not generic, pointing out the fact that most teachers write comments just for the sake of writing something but she was careful and attentive in her comments, which she hoped students would appreciate. Similarly, the NP preferred to give feedback that was more to the point and specific rather that generic, since she felt generic comments are not helpful for students at all, as she explained in the following extract:

> When I say 'be careful about your grammar', he or she does not get anything, but if I say 'focus on passive sentences or linkers', they do better in their final drafts, so being specific is very important for them because they do not know what went wrong or they cannot identify the mistakes. (NP, SSI-2)

The most effective comments, for the EP, are those written in short tutorial form and those which help students to think and look at the paragraph in a more critical way, which she had learned from her experience and from the in-service training she had received at different universities. However, she believed there is no perfect way of responding and that teachers should therefore alter their practice depending on different contexts. In short, she approved of writing not only negative but also positive comments, using symbols and giving direct written feedback. She added that teachers:

> ... should show how mistakes could be corrected, not just point out the mistakes, not just using signals but also showing how they can be corrected. I also suggest everybody should do some sort of free writing with their students if they can. Most semesters, I try to do two or three creative writing activities. (EP, SSI-2)

As is clear, she emphasized the lack of free and creative writing in writing classes. To replace the grammar-focused writing syllabus of the school, she indicated that she would apply a journal-keeping activity with those who volunteered so that she could "have some satisfaction in the job" (EP, SSI-1).

Despite her claim that she did not have any theoretical background, the NP stated that comments should be understandable so she kept them short, to the point and simple. So what she said about the best way to

respond hinted at the issue of the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 61). A good illustration of this is her comment "I learned how to give and how not to give feedback from my teachers' feedback to my work" (NP, SSI-1). Still, like the EP she expressed her discontent with the efficiency of the pre-service education concerning written feedback in the following comment:

> It was limited practice for me. ... I do not think it really prepared me for [providing] feedback and also as a teacher you learn by time. The experience [and] wisdom come with this period. ... You should really live these things and then you can come up with your own style or philosophy. ... Maybe they can give a course about [providing] feedback to future teachers. (NP, SRI-2)

As is clear, she thought that trial, error and experience with students would determine and form a teacher's feedback style, which emphasizes her struggle to cope with the issue on her own. Unlike the EP, she expressed the shortcoming of the in-service training which she had received for two weeks at the beginning of her teaching career about written feedback as she had not dealt with writing handouts before. Other than that, she did not report receiving any help on how to respond to writing. However, she approved of the process writing approach used in the institution as she believed that it contributes to students' writing development. For her, comments should also guide students to use every-day language, and should encourage not discourage them. She further indicated that a teacher should avoid giving too much feedback. Above all, she emphasized the importance of empathy when writing comments, which was crucial for her. Regarding the codes which are not considered to be comments and by which students discover their errors and self-correct, both teachers agreed on their effectiveness only when the paragraphs are not full of grammatical and content-based errors. That is, when there are too many grammatical errors in a sentence and/or the content is problematic and unclear, using codes does not yield the desired corrections. As for the reasons why students still fail in writing, the EP cited student laziness, the lack of critical thinking skills and the school's hectic schedule and writing policy. Similarly, the NP blamed the students for their own failure because of their heavy dependence on translation, their inadequate capacity to learn, the school schedule and policies, and the fact that she was their sole source of information. So neither of the teachers blamed herself or her practices for student failure.

Thus, teachers both consider written comments to be effective in improving students' writing as long as they are constructive. The EP, like the NP, emphasized the importance of writing positive comments before negative ones to avoid student resentment, which the EP reported was thanks to the theories she read about in pre-service education. Still, like the NP, she indicated the lack of training she received during the pre-service education on responding to writing and error correction in particular. She attributed most of what she knew regarding responding to writing to her experiences and the in-service training. However, the NP stated that her knowledge about responding to writing was thanks to her pre-service teachers because she imitated those whose responding practices she liked while giving written feedback.

In addition, both of the teachers agreed that comments should be specific not generic. The EP stressed that there was no one size fits all application of responding to writing and thus teachers should alter their practices. Also, the EP suggested ways to deal with the monotonous grammar-focused writing syllabus to have some autonomy in the class. As an answer to the reasons for student failure despite all the efforts, both teachers cited various factors beyond their control. That is, they blamed students when they failed in writing.

How teachers respond and the motives behind their practices towards students' writing
Foci when providing written feedback on the second and final drafts

The EP's foci when providing written feedback did not vary throughout the term, because, as the portfolio analyses revealed, she corrected each grammatical error on the second and final drafts of the students using codes, which she thought were effective "mostly for language not organization or ideas". She also emphasized grammar-based corrections in her comments (see Table 1). The reason why she gave comprehensive corrective feedback was because students "studied so many skills around the same content" (EP, SRI-1). She emphasized that she gave feedback heavily on content and then on grammar. Her use of codes varied considerably on different papers. That is, she was very flexible in the use of codes and did not stick to the ones provided by the school as the "choice of symbols and the way to use these symbols were also very dependent on the student that wrote it" (EP, SRI-1).

Similarly, throughout the term, the NP was observed to give comprehensive corrective feedback. She indicated, "the most important part while responding to drafts is grammar". This is because the

administration wants student writing to be accurate (NP, SSI-2). She went on to say that she mostly focused on grammar, which she found easy to correct, and secondly on content, which she considered more difficult. It was also observed that she corrected grammatical errors even when there were coherence and organization problems in the paragraph, for which she blamed the school policy and added that the administration is "so stuck with grammar and students are also stuck with it" (NP, SRI-2). Due to the fact that students are required to use the structures introduced in a writing handout, her focus shifted naturally to grammar, which, she considered, made her feedback rather artificial, grammar-based and demotivating. However, she was not correcting every error in a few papers because she did "not know how to correct them" (NP, SRI-2).

She was also observed to ignore or just suggest vocabulary in parentheses since "vocabulary is the least important part" for her because she thought even native-like speakers sometimes cannot use the words appropriately (NP, SSI-2). She agreed with the EP in that sometimes the codes are not effective as they are "not a magical stick", meaning that they do not always work in practice (NP, SRI-1-3). Also, both agreed that coding is tiring for teachers and students alike; however, the NP argued that it works for the majority of the students. She preferred to write comments when she thought that codes were not sufficient.

In brief, both the EP and NP gave comprehensive corrective feedback throughout the term and used codes, which they thought were only effective in correcting the grammatical errors rather than those in content and organization. As for the reason behind providing comprehensive corrective feedback, the EP thought grammatical skills were well practiced in similar contexts so students had to show their expertise in grammar. However, the NP blamed the school policies that require them to focus heavily on grammar, which she believed made her written feedback rather artificial and discouraging. This shows that the institutional context shaped teachers' cognition and thus practices to a great extent (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Li, 2012). As written feedback practices were strict in the institution, "teachers' WCF practices are more likely to adhere to institutional guidelines than follow their own beliefs" as was supported in this study as well (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014, p. 115).

Although they claimed to pay attention to content first and then grammar, the analyses of their written feedback revealed the opposite. Also, it was observed that the EP was flexible in the application of codes while the NP stuck only to those provided by the institution.

Table 1
Number and type of the comments which the teachers wrote (Ferris, 2007)

Comments	Experienced participant (EP)				Novice participant (NP)			
	short	average	long	total	short	average	long	total
Direction/statement e.g. Murat, you should be more careful	0	4	2	6	5	8	3	16
Direction/imperative e.g. Add an example to social activities	4	6	0	10	11	4	0	15
Give information/question e.g. Third reason is irrelevant. It is downside of phones but what is the relation with invention of it?	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Give information/statement e.g. T.S. missing	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Positive comment/statement or exclamation e.g. Very good	62	4	0	66	5	0	0	5

Grammar/mechanics comment/question, statement or imperative e.g. Present cont.? Simple past?	28	16	5	49	3	3	0	6

Table 1 shows the amount and types of comment which the EP and the NP frequently opted for when giving written feedback. Data for this section were gathered from ten randomly selected student portfolios of each teacher and in each portfolio, there were nine tasks in total. The length of each comment was determined in line with the criteria suggested by Ferris, (2007).

As is clear from the table, the number of comments the EP wrote in total is almost three times as many as the NP gave over the term. But both preferred to give short comments in general rather than long or very long ones. The analysis showed that of the 145 comments which the EP wrote, the highest number belonged to the category of positive comment/statement or exclamation, consisting generally of generic phrases such as 'good' or 'very good', which was because "praising, or criticizing or telling off the students are important because students need to know that we are really reading their papers" (EP, SRI-1). Also, believing that comments are a way of communicating with students, she used them frequently in her written feedback, which might account for the higher number of her comments. The second highest percentage belonged to comments on grammar/mechanics, among which the number of imperatives was substantial. Moreover, the number of her comments showing direction in the form of imperatives was high, which was because she felt close to her students and thus did not mind using imperative structures in her comments. Quite a few of the comments were asking for information and the remaining ones were direction/statements and give information/statements. However, she did not use any direction/question comments.

As the categorization in Table 1 shows, unlike the EP, the NP wrote fewer comments and that the majority of the NP's comments were direction/statement and direction/imperative. She gave the following explanation for providing so few comments:

> I do not prefer to write comments. Just about the grammar or 'use this more' because this is the criterion by which I will give the points or cut the points, so I am just saying do this or you will lose points. (NP, SRI-1)

As another reason for her preference for writing few comments, she gave her pre-service education, as the following explanation shows:

> (If) there is more writing of the teacher than of students, it makes you feel bad. At least for me, as a student, this was the case at university. I had such an experience. Even if good or bad, too much feedback is not good for the students. It might be confusing. (NP, SRI-3)

Moreover, unlike the EP who preferred to write numerous positive and mechanical comments, the comments which the NP wrote on grammar/mechanics were only six in total. Additionally, she wrote only five of these comments on positive aspects and these were generally in the form of smileys, which she explained as follows:

> This is my style because if you really praise them and if they fail, they feel bad, but as a teacher you also feel bad because you know that s/he has the potential to do better but because of your praising maybe, she just got snob and stopped studying. (NP, SRI-3)

Other comments included direction/question and giving information/question. The give information/statement section was not commented on, however. The feedback analyses confirmed her preference for short comments because she had received long feedback from her teachers at university, which, she explained, was very demotivating and disheartening for her.

Moreover, the portfolio analysis showed whether the teachers used any hedges/softeners in their comments as such comments may "tone down criticisms and reflect a positive, sympathetic relationship with student-writers" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 196). The results showed that, of the 145 comments which the EP wrote, only 15 included hedged comments, which were all lexical ones. That is, in addition to avoiding syntactic hedges and positive softeners, she commented on only those containing modal verbs or some lexical items, despite stating the importance of giving positive and negative comments at the same time. Likewise, the NP preferred to write only very few hedged comments (5) and the ones which she wrote were all lexical hedges, which resembled the EP's practice.

Table 2
Text-Specific Comments of experienced and novice participant

	0: generic comment (could have been written on any paper) Exp: nice intro.	1: Text specific comment Exp: why is the American system better for the children, in your opinion?
Experienced Participant (EP)	134	11
Novice Participant (NP)	41	11

Unlike specific comments, generic comments are those that can be written on any paper of the same kind and do not include any personal reference or content. As is quite obvious in the analysis in Table 2, the EP used generic comments considerably more than text-specific ones. This is quite clear in her positive and mechanics/grammar comments, which constitute the highest number in her written feedback. However, she had emphasized the following:

> My comments are not mass production, they are custom made. I do not write similar or the same sentences to everyone. ... They are personalized. ... Of course coherence is very important also. When I write feedback, I also try to focus on how I can get them to write more coherent paragraphs where the ideas are in harmony and the sentences are in harmony with each other, and not just independent sentences that do not fit together. (EP, SSI-2)

What made her comments specific was that she preferred to start responding by writing students' names to make the students realize that her written feedback specifically refers to their own problem and using names is also a way to acknowledge the students. Similarly, the NP's generic comments outnumbered her text-specific comments, although she had indicated her choice for specific ones as the best way to respond. In brief, both teachers gave highly generic comments despite their testimony to the contrary. However, since every student is an individual, teachers' "feedback to students should be personalized rather than rubber-stamped or generic-sounding" (Ferris, 2007, p. 168). Also, teachers should provide specific comments since such comments generally result in more positive changes than the generic ones (Ferris, 1997).

Table 3
Margin versus End Comments in the experienced and the novice participant's written feedback

Comment type	*EP*		*NP*	
	2nd draft	*Final*	*2nd draft*	*Final*
Margin comments	33	1	12	1
End comments	53	58	30	9
Total	86	59	42	10

Despite not being part of the original scale used by Ferris (2007), the margin and end comments in the second and final drafts were also analysed as "the margins of students' written work are the ideal site for teacher-student conversations about what and how students are thinking about their essay subjects, about how teachers respond to their thinking, and about the subjects themselves" (Hodges, 1997, p.77).

The findings show that the EP wrote more comments on the second draft than on the final draft. Of the 86 comments on the second draft, 33 were marginal comments whereas only one of the 59 comments was written in the margin in the final draft. The 58 end comments she wrote were mostly generic phrases like "good, very good, excellent" with a few others for individual recommendations for improvement such as "be careful with fragments". In brief, the EP preferred to write more marginal comments on the second draft compared with the final draft, which she thought was because if there is a very good sentence, she should indicate it directly. However, in general, the number of classical end comments was considerably higher and she used them to refer to the whole paragraph and the effort which the student had made in general. Like the EP, the NP wrote most of her comments at the bottom of the paragraphs, which was because there was more space for her to write at the bottom of the paper, an issue which she discussed in the following extract:

> ... if you give them that feedback at the end, they are reading their own work and then there is the comment part. Everything is in their head and the comments are also at the end so they can just link the things and the feedback together. That is easier for them. (NP, SRI-2)

The NP explained that she imitated practices she had experienced in college by writing mostly end notes and few marginal comments when responding to student writing although she was not sure whether it has any methodological foundations. She generally preferred to write comments on the second drafts. Twelve out of 42 comments on the second drafts were written in the margins, whereas this was only one out of ten on the final drafts.

In short, both teachers wrote more end comments than marginal ones. Interestingly, the EP had much more comments written on the final drafts than did the NP. Still, both corrected the errors and commented on the final drafts although students are not expected to revise them and "students pay more attention to teacher feedback provided on preliminary drafts..." instead of final ones (Ferris, 1995, p. 33). Thus, though such comments on final drafts are considered a waste of teaching time, because this practice was part of the school policy, both the EP and NP were engaging in practices known to contravene good response practices in obedience to institutional policies.

Discussion & Conclusion

Drawing on the findings of the present study, we believe there are several implications for teachers, teacher educators and institutions. From the comments made by both the novice teacher and the experienced one about the lack of pre-service education which they had received on written feedback, there appears to be a need, as expressed in previous studies, for explicit, practical and professional pre-service writing teacher education on written feedback (Ferris, 2007, 2011; Hochstetler, 2007; Lee, 2008, 2010). Although there were more than twenty years between the graduations of the two teachers who participated in the current study, they both criticized the lack of proper education on written feedback and the theory and memorizing-based aspect of their previous education. Even so, whereas the EP benefited from the methodology books she had read in her pre-service education concerning motivation and praise in written feedback, the NP synthesized her previous teachers' feedback on her own work, which matches the notion of the "apprenticeship of observation" which Lortie (1975) put forward (p. 61). So during pre-service education, prospective teachers can be introduced to the literature on written feedback, and the various ways of responding to student writing.

Since writing commentary is "demanding and difficult", time-consuming and often not well-taught to practitioners, it is necessary to make teachers realize what and how they are responding and whether changes need to be made in their practice (Bruno & Santos, 2010, p. 118). Moreover, after the theory-based education, teachers could be given an opportunity to respond to real student papers during the practicum which would prepare them more for the reality of the classroom, and finally, they should analyse their own written feedback, as suggested by Ferris (2007). In this way, teachers would have the opportunity to reflect on their practices and thus self-monitor themselves throughout their career, which is crucial for self-improvement.

Besides, because, as Stanulis et al. (2002) suggested, "effective induction support can benefit student learning, as competent, collaborative teachers who are energized, feel professionally supported, and feel competent are best positioned to meet the needs of children", in-service education could be enhanced with a focus on written feedback (p. 80). Both of the participants in the current study, the NP in particular, felt helpless, frustrated and desperate, which highlights the necessity for a grounded in-service preparation together with continuous help and guidance for novice teachers. Also, the NP was cautious about praising the students as that she believed would weaken her authority in the class, which together with her other reservations indicate the need for continuous help and guidance for novice teachers.

Furthermore, as confirmed in many previous studies, school policies have a significant influence on teachers' beliefs and practices (Bailey & Garner, 2010; Lee, 2011; Paiva, 2011; Price et al., 2010). The two teachers indicated that the school policies concerning writing in this particular case made it too mechanical, artificial, non-creative and grammar-focused, which affected their attitudes towards writing, written feedback and the

school itself. Both expressed their desire for an element of autonomy. Therefore, although mandated policies work to some extent, especially for novice teachers, any school policies about writing should have some flexibility to ensure standardization and teacher autonomy simultaneously, which would not only contribute to teacher satisfaction and autonomy but also to student motivation and creativity.

Additionally, to address the lack of student improvement in writing, the school syllabus can be revised to allocate more time for teachers to provide written feedback, and for students to revise and digest newly acquired structures. To encourage better results, the institution can also introduce process genre-based approaches. Genre-based approach would complement the process approach as it gets "students into new discourse communities by making them aware of the characteristically patterned ways that people in the community use language to fulfil particular communicative purposes in recurring situations" (Kern, 2000, p. 183). This would probably lead to more learning, enthusiasm and fun for students because the way the process approach is applied in the institution is quite mechanical and monotonous, as was confirmed by the participants. That is, students often memorize structures like topic and concluding sentences, are not allowed to use their imagination and creativity and naturally receive most of the feedback on grammar. To get numerous and sound feedback concerning writing and written feedback, students can be asked to reflect on the writing handouts in general, on the topics they have written about, and on their effect on their proficiency in writing and in English in general. That is, the students in the institution fill a reflection form that requires them to answer some general questions about what they have achieved and need to achieve in the following writing handouts six times during the year. By adding more specific questions, these forms can be a valuable source of feedback for the teachers and institution. For instance, by adding questions requiring students to reflect on teachers' feedback practices and how they had benefitted from them, the quality of the reflection form can be enhanced. This would definitely give the teachers an idea about what they are really doing and how their practices influence students because "how teachers teach can have a direct impact on how students learn" (Lee, 2010, p. 143). Furthermore, as was nicely put by Ferris (2014), "having put so much effort into constructing oral or written commentary, teachers should take the final step of ensuring that students can and do utilize it effectively" (p. 21). The institution would also have a chance to revise, if necessary, the program and respond to students' needs in writing accordingly.

In brief, as pre- and in-service education, institutional policies and teachers' own attitudes determine the practice of written feedback, teacher educators and institutions should intervene and provide as much help as possible to ensure the success of this challenging task.

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