

L2 WRITING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MISTAKES IN STUDENT
WRITING AND THEIR PREFERENCES REGARDING FEEDBACK: THE
CASE OF A TURKISH PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

SEPTEMBER 2010

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ABSTRACT

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M.A. Program of English Language Teaching

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September 2010, 161 pages

This study aimed to investigate L2 writing instructors' perceptions of seriousness of different mistake types in upper-intermediate level students' essays. It also set out to examine the teachers' preferences related with feedback provision. Furthermore, whether there were discrepancies between the teachers' claims about the issues mentioned above and their actual performance while marking the essays was looked into. The study was conducted at the Preparatory School of a private university in Turkey. Ten essays written by upper intermediate level students were marked by ten writing teachers who showed the most disturbing mistakes in these essays. They also gave feedback for these papers and half of the teachers were requested to think aloud while evaluating the essays. In addition, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used by the

questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS 15.0. This data gathering instrument was implemented on ten writing teachers working at the institution. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics were used. The averages showing the seriousness of different mistake types and the frequency at which the teachers use different feedback techniques were revealed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five teachers. The results of the interviews were analyzed through content analysis. The results of the study revealed that 80 % of the teachers viewed content related and organizational problems more disturbing than those related with accuracy. However, for 20 % of the teachers mistakes concerning the accuracy of the sentences were more serious. As for the feedback preferences of the teachers, 90 % of them used error codes while marking the essays and all the teachers preferred to write comments. While 60 % of the teachers were in favour of marking students' mistakes comprehensively, the rest (40 %) believed selective marking was preferable. Moreover, it was found out that the teachers' claims were compatible with their actual performances although some contradictions were observed in their performance.

Keywords: seriousness of different mistakes, feedback techniques, selective vs comprehensive marking, teachers' perceptions and preferences.

ÖZ

İKİNCİ DİLDE YAZMA DERSİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ORTA-ÜST DÜZEY ÖĞRENCİ KOMPOZİSYONLARINDA BULUNAN HATALARA KARŞI TUTUMLARI VE GERİ BİLDİRİM SAĞLAMA TERCİHLERİ: ÖZEL BİR TÜRK ÜNİVERSİTESİNDEKİ DURUM

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Eylül, 2010, 161 sayfa

Bu çalışma ikinci dilde yazma dersi öğretmenlerinin orta- üst düzey öğrenciler tarafından yazılan kompozisyonlardaki hatalara ilişkin tutumları incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bunun yanında, bu öğretmenlerin geri bildirim sağlama tercihleri de incelenmiştir. Son olarak, öğretmenlerin yukarıda bahsedilen konularda kendi tutumları ile ilişkin iddiaları ile gerçek uygulamaları arasında fark olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Çalışma, Türkiye’de özel bir üniversitenin Temel İngilizce biriminde uygulanmıştır. Orta-üst düzey öğrenciler tarafından yazılmış olan 10 adet kompozisyon öğretmenler tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve öğretmenler kompozisyonlarda en ciddi gördükleri hataları bildirmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmenler bu kompozisyonlar ile ilgili geri bildirim de sağlamış ve 5 öğretmen

bunu sesli düşünerek yapmış, sesleri kaydedilmiştir. Ek olarak bir anket ve bir yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme içeren iki araç daha kullanılmıştır. Anketin sonuçları SPSS 15.0 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Bu ölçek kuramda çalışan 10 öğretmen üzerinde uygulanmıştır. Veri analizi için betimsel istatistik kullanılmış ve her hata tipine verilen önemi ve değişik geri bildirim yöntemlerinin öğretmenlerce kullanım sıklığını gösteren ortalamalar elde edilmiştir. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme 5 öğretmene uygulanmış ve görüşme sonuçları içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları öğretmenlerin % 80' inin kompozisyonların içerik ve metin düzenlemesini ilgilendiren sorunların kullanılan dilin dilbilgisel doğruluğuna ilişkin hatalardan daha önemli olduğunu düşündüklerini göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerin % 20' si ise tam tersini düşünmektedir. Öğretmenlerin geri bildirim sağlama tercihleri ile ilgili olarak, % 90'ının hataları kod kullanarak göstermek istedikleri ve kompozisyonlara kısa yorumlar yazdıkları gözlemlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin % 60'ının hataların tümünü öğrencilere göstermek isterken, % 40'ının sadece seçilen bazı hatalara dikkat çekmenin daha uygun olduğunu düşündükleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin kendi tutumları ile ilişkin beyanlarının gerçek uygulamalarıyla uyumlu olduğu görülmüş ama uygulamalarında bazı çelişkiler bulunmuştur. Anahtar kelimeler: Farklı hataların ağırlıkları, Geri bildirim sağlama yöntemleri, Seçici ya da bütüncül hata bildirim, Öğretmenlerin tutum ve tercihleri.

To my family,

For their perpetual belief in me...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Enginarlar, for his helpful suggestions, guidance and motivation during the preparation of this study.

I am also deeply indebted to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çiler Hatipoğlu, whose constructive attitude, stimulating suggestions, invaluable feedback and encouragement helped me for writing this thesis. I must acknowledge as well Dr. Yasemin Aydemir for her insightful feedback which contributed significantly to this study.

I also wish to thank my colleagues who brought out the good ideas in me, and always supported my dreams and aspirations. Without their help, encouragement and constant guidance, I could not have finalized this thesis.

Finally, my special thanks go to my parents and my dear brothers for their unconditional confidence, endless love and faith in me. I owe them a great deal.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section, background information related to the study is provided. The second section introduces the study and the next section describes the purpose of the study and the research questions. In the third section, the significance of the study is explained. Finally, the last section defines some related terms.

I.I. Background to the Study

Writing is an important productive skill that enables students to communicate with readers. With the developments in the language teaching field, the notion of writing has changed dramatically. Matsuda (2003) points out that writing was neglected in the late nineteenth century when applied linguistics rose and when the focus of language teaching was on speaking. This was the case since writing was considered as an orthographic representation of speech and as the highest literacy need for people was writing letters. In fact, the rise of L2 studies began in the 1940s when a significant number of foreign students went abroad in order to study. To be able to teach these students English, a curriculum in which production of written discourse was not included was prepared since it was thought that mastering the structure and sounds of a language would be enough to be able to write. This attempt contributed to the creation of the field of teaching English as a second language (TESL). The teaching of writing was not an important part of the ESL teachers' preparation until 1950s, though. More attention started to be given to the teaching of writing when the number of international students started to

increase and it was revealed that these students needed to be taught how to write in higher education institutions. After some relatively unsuccessful attempts, TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) was founded in 1966 and writing issues were separated into L1 and L2 components. L2 writing issues were placed in the area of TESL. It was clear that training in L2 writing was necessary since ESL students who had completed the oral component of intensive English programs in colleges were not ready for first year composition courses. Therefore, L2 writing started to be viewed as a subdiscipline of TESL and a number of pedagogical approaches were proposed. The first of these approaches viewed writing at sentence level structure since any free form of writing was thought to be harmful because it created the risk of making errors, which had to be eliminated wherever possible. In this approach, combining and substitution exercises were used since these would prevent the occurrence of errors. Soon, it was understood that sentence level exercises did not enable students to produce original sentences as well as free compositions. Because of that, the use of guided composition started. In this approach, students were assisted by presenting a model or plan to follow, or using pictures and they were asked to create a new piece of writing similar to a text that had been read. However, guided composition also failed to help students write free compositions and writing at discourse level structure was emphasized. Writing was no longer thought to be only an orthographic symbolization of speech but a careful selection and organization of experience. This was a step between guided exercises at the sentence level and free composition. This period lasted until 1980s, when the

interest in composition studies started to move from the features of text to the process of writing. The process based approach viewed writing as a process where students develop organization and meaning. It was further suggested that students would make use of multiple drafts (process based approach) and feedback from both teachers and peers (Matsuda, 2003).

In process based approach, writing is viewed as an opportunity where learners can communicate their ideas so students are asked to write texts where they are supposed to express their opinions clearly and to support them. Since providing feedback at different stages of writing is considered to be an important role of writing teachers, with the beginning of process based approach, a lot of attention was given to issues of feedback. Researchers questioned the use of feedback, what it should focus on as well as how and when it should be provided. Although some researchers like Lalande (1982) and Truscott (1996) suggest that providing students feedback is not beneficial- they mean error feedback, though- there are many researchers (Fathman and Whalley, 1985; Robb, Ross and Shortreed, 1986; Ferris, 2006) claiming that feedback is of use for students. Believing that feedback benefits students and students also like to receive feedback, writing teachers give feedback (Radecki and Swales, 1988; Enginarlar, 1993; Coşkun, 2007; Eyllenen, 2008). Feedback provided by writing teachers might focus on different components of writing and it may be given in a variety of ways. Teachers could prefer to focus their feedback on the content or language forms used in an essay, or they might choose to attend to both. Despite the fact that it is proposed that concentrating on meaning creates better results than paying attention to the accuracy of

language used (Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Semke, 1984; Fazio, 2001), Fathman and Whalley (1990) contend that focusing on grammar results in more development in writing skill. How teachers give feedback is also one of the points that attracts the attention of researchers. Ferris (1999) suggests teachers use indirect feedback strategies which produce better results in the long term. However, in some cases when students cannot find the correct forms of some mistakes since there are not rules to apply to correct them like wrong word choices, direct feedback should be applied. In addition, teachers could prefer to mark all the mistakes (comprehensive marking) or choose some mistakes to mark (selective marking). While some researchers put forward that selective marking is preferable since it is easier to implement and creates better results (Ferris, 1999; Lee, 2003; Ellis et al, 2008), some others deny the superiority of selective marking over comprehensive marking (Hendrickson, 1981; Wong, 2007). Finally, teachers use different feedback techniques such as only illustrating mistakes, illustrating mistakes and categorizing them by using error codes or writing comments on the mistakes. However, most of the surveys show that using any of these techniques does not yield significantly different results (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981; Robb et al., 1986; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Tmkaya (2003); Eyllenen, 2008). What teachers and students think about all the issues mentioned above is also important in order for administrators of institutions or teachers working there to decide on a feedback implementation procedure.

Students sometimes write pages of essays which writing teachers must read and mark. However, marking student writing and providing feedback is not an easy task as illustrated in the following description:

"Portrait of the English Teacher as a Tired Dog,"

It is a November midnight, Johnny Carson has just ended, and throughout the block the last lights flick off-all but one that is. A single orange light blooms in the darkness. It is the English teacher, weary- eyed, cramped of leg, hand, and brain, sifting listlessly, but doggedly through piles of themes, circling, marking, grading, commenting, guilt- ridden because the students were promised that the papers would be returned last week. The fifth cup of coffee grows cold and bitter. Just one more paper. And then one more. And then ... (Judy, 1981, p.208).

One of the factors that makes the marking process that difficult is the existence of errors that many teachers feel obliged to deal with. Krashen (1982) refers to error as any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or the cause of the deviation might be. Ellis describes an error as a deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis, 1994). Hendrickson defines an error as an utterance, form, or structure that a particular language teacher considers to be unacceptable because its use is inappropriate or it does not exist in real-life discourse (Hendrickson, 1978). In older approaches, errors were regarded as a 'sin' and students were not allowed to make any mistakes. However, making mistakes is thought to be normal and a part of the learning process today. For many people, seriousness of different types of mistakes or problems is not the same, though. Writing teachers' perception of error gravity influences the feedback they give to writers. If teachers think that errors of form (grammar, vocabulary and mechanics) are more important than the ideational errors (organization, description, coherence

and creativity), or vice versa, they will concentrate on these errors in their feedbacks, which will greatly influence students' approach to writing. Students might make changes in their compositions according to what they think the teachers' concerns and priorities are since they may believe that teachers know best (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990).

As mentioned above, there are various ways of providing students with feedback. Teachers can correct students' mistakes themselves, they can just illustrate the mistakes and ask the students to correct them, they can both illustrate and write codes showing the type of mistakes and either correct them or ask students to come up with the corrected form. They can also write comments on student papers asking some questions or reminding rules and they may put a signal on the margin that there is/ are a mistake or mistakes on a specific line. Writing teachers may choose to apply either one of these techniques or a combination of them. They might also prefer to attend to all the mistakes in a paper or to some of them, which might change according to the level of the students, aims of the task or the teachers' priorities about the components of writing. Many scientists like Kepner (1991), Fathman and Whalley (1990), Ferris (2006), Tümkaya (2003), Ellis et al (2008), Hyland and Anan (2006) have carried out numerous studies in order to investigate the usefulness of feedback and efficiency of different feedback types, the effect of comprehensive and selective marking on students' subsequent success and the areas where feedback works well. These are really important questions which need to be answered for every context individually since every teaching context is unique because of different institutional aims, student and teacher

characteristics. One of these contexts is Atılım University Preparatory School in Turkey where both students and writing teachers spend a great deal of time and effort on writing skill. Despite this effort from both parties, there are some problems at the institution regarding writing classes and students' success in writing. Some complaints coming from the administration about the low success rate of students, and those from teachers and students have led the researcher to investigate writing teachers' opinions about the issues mentioned above. In order to learn more about the institution where this investigation was made, and the aims of the study, a more detailed description of the writing unit and research design is needed.

I.II. The Study

The study was conducted at the Preparatory School of Atılım University; a private university in Turkey. As the medium of instruction is English at the institution, students attend the preparatory school in order to learn English well enough to be able to study in their departments. At the preparatory school, they receive 27 hours of instruction a week of which 4 hours are spent to teach writing. Students start with writing very short paragraphs and letters and proceed to write different types of essays such as cause and effect and opinion essays. Each week they learn how to write these essays by means of materials prepared by writing unit teachers and they write an essay on a given topic in class in one class hour. The essays they write are marked and evaluated by teachers out of a score of 15. They evaluate the essays using analytical scoring system in which the use of English is given maximum 5 points, while vocabulary is given maximum 3, content 4 and organization and unity are

given maximum 3 points. There is a fixed feedback system which every teacher is expected to follow. This feedback system was decided by the administration since they believe that it is advantageous as the students have a chance to correct their mistakes and learn from them. Writing teachers are supposed to mark student essays comprehensively and illustrate mistakes by underlining them and using error codes. However, some of the teachers and students have some negative feelings towards the feedback procedure conducted there although there are some others who think that this system is quite favourable. After receiving their essays marked by their teachers, students can correct their mistakes and submit their second drafts to their teachers and if they have corrected their mistakes, 1 point is added to their grade of their first draft. However, as writing a second draft is not compulsory and only one point is given to the second draft, not all students write their essays again.

The average score students receive at the end of a term makes up 10 percent of their passing grade to the next level. Apart from this, they take 2 mid term exams a term and 15 percent of the overall midterm grade is given to the writing part. Two tables showing the assessment scale are given below.

Table I.I. *Distribution of the overall term grade to different components*

| Overall grade | 2 mid-term exams | Weekly quizzes | Writing tasks | Project work |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 100 | 65 % | 15 % | 10 % | 10 % |

Table I.II. *Distribution of the overall mid-term grade to different components*

| Mid-term exam | Use of English | Reading | Vocabulary | Writing | Listening |
|---------------|----------------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|
| 100 | 30 | 25 | 20 | 15 | 10 |

Writing teachers in the institution teach 12 hours a week and they teach writing to 3 classes, which means they mark about 60 essays and their second drafts written by some of the students a week.

As can be understood, both students and writing teachers at the institution spend a lot of effort in order to improve students' writing skills so that they can study in their departments. It has been stated during some formal meetings that despite their efforts, neither these two parties nor the administration is satisfied with students' performance in the writing part of midterm and proficiency exams. Another problem faced regarding writing classes in the institution is that the students are not motivated to write. During some informal conversations with them, they said that although they try a lot, they are not good enough at writing essays in English. Apart from these, some complaints coming from students about the feedback received from the teachers show that there is a mismatch between the expectations of students and teachers' marking procedure. Some students complain that they cannot make use of the feedback they get from their teachers, or some say that they cannot figure out why their teachers take off so much of their marks although their essays do not contain so many mistakes. Again during some informal conversations with writing teachers, they complained that some students, especially weaker ones cannot understand or find how to correct their mistakes

and there may be mistakes even in their second drafts. They think that it may be because they do not understand error codes used, or even they understand them they sometimes cannot correct their mistakes. Lastly, some teachers state that it is sometimes impossible to find codes for all of the students' mistakes, especially when a sentence contains too many mistakes.

I.III. Purpose of the Study

Feedback is an important component of writing classes. Writing teachers can provide their students with feedback in a variety of ways they think will be most effective to improve their writing skills. In addition, it is a fact that writing teachers' perceptions about the seriousness of different types of mistakes and problems and about the importance of certain components of essays have a great effect on their students' attitudes towards these issues.

Because of the reasons above, the first aim of the study is to investigate what components of the upper intermediate level student writings writing teachers value more while evaluating their essays. Knowing if teachers focus more on the meaning to be conveyed by students or accuracy of the language used in essays is of great importance since it creates different results in the development of the writing skills and students shape their conception of writing by taking their teachers' perceptions into account. Apart from that, how teachers prioritise different mistakes found in student essays is surveyed along with their reasons.

Secondly, how teachers prefer to give feedback to their students is investigated. If the writing teachers prefer to implement selective or

comprehensive marking as well as what techniques they would use if they were free to choose are looked into to see if their preferences match with the feedback system imposed by the institution. The teachers are also asked to state their reasons for their choices.

Lastly, it is possible that there may be mismatches between teachers' perceptions about error gravity and their feedback giving preferences and how they mark papers. For instance, some teachers may think that they are providing more feedback on the issues of content and organization since they view these more significant components of writing than use of English. Their feedback on the student papers may show just the opposite, though. In order to see if such incongruence exists at the institution where the study takes place, whether these teachers' thoughts on the ideal feedback provision are compatible with what they really do while giving feedback is searched.

To be able to realize these aims, the following research questions are addressed:

- 1- How do writing teachers prioritise student mistakes (in the areas of use of English, vocabulary, content and organization) in expository writing?
- 2- Do teachers prefer selective or comprehensive marking?
- 3-

3.1. Which error feedback techniques do writing teachers prefer?

- a- Indicating (underline/circle) errors and correcting them.

- b-* Indicating (underline/circle) errors, correcting them and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code).
- c-* Indicating (underline/circle) errors, but not correcting them.
- d-* Indicating (underline/circle) errors and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code), but not correcting them.
- e-* Hinting at the location of errors.
- f-* Hinting at the location of errors and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code).
- g-* Writing brief comments on the quality of content and organization.

3.2. Why do they prefer those error feedback techniques?

- 4- Are teachers' claimed perceptions of error seriousness and preferences about error marking procedure compatible with what they really do while evaluating essays? If so, to what extent?

I.IV. Significance of the Study

There are several key issues in writing such as teachers' ideas on the importance of different mistake types and their effect on the feedback provided by them, influence of different feedback treatments such as comprehensive or selective marking, use of different feedback techniques and the focus of feedback on the success of students. Therefore, it is fair that the students are treated in the best way to produce a good piece of writing. The teachers' perceptions about the significance of different components of writing and their preferences for feedback provision along with their reasons should be revealed so that interested parties can see if teachers' ideas and preferences are

compatible with the findings of research in the area. If some implications emerge at the end of this study, administration and writing unit teachers may produce different materials from those they use at present and their instruction might need to change. This may result in higher student success. The study may generate implications for reducing teacher time and effort that is spent marking, providing feedback to student essays and for increasing the efficiency of this feedback. Last but not least, the study may function as a reference for future studies which concern similar issues.

I.V. Definitions of Terms

Before moving to reviewing conclusions of some related studies, definitions of some key terms are needed.

- Mistake vs error: Mistakes are like slips of tongue that are generally one-time-only events. The speaker who makes a mistake is able to recognise it as a mistake and correct it if necessary. An error is systematic, though. In other words, it is likely to occur repeatedly and is not recognised by the learner as an error (Corder, 1967).¹
- Global Error: 1- A communicative error that causes a proficient speaker of a foreign language either to misinterpret an oral or written message or to consider the message incomprehensible with the textual content of the error (Hendrickson, 1978).
2- An error that interferes with communication or the overall sentence structure (Wong, 2007)

¹ In this study, the term ‘mistake’ is used as synonymous to ‘error’.

- Local Error: 1- A linguistic error that makes a form or structure in a sentence appear awkward but nevertheless, causes a proficient speaker of a foreign language little or no difficulty in understanding the intended meaning of a sentence, given its contextual framework (Hendrickson, 1978).
2- An error that affects single elements of a sentence and usually does not disrupt the communication process (Wong, 2007)

As for the distinction between global and local errors, it is stated that global errors result in misunderstanding the message while local errors are errors in isolated sentence elements like verb inflections that do not prevent the comprehensibility of the message although they make sentence structures awkward (Wong, 2007).

- Feedback: Input from a reader to a writer with the effects of providing information to the writer for revision (Keh, 1990).
Any procedure used to inform a learner where an instructional response is right or wrong (Lalande, 1982).
- Direct Feedback: The provision of the correct linguistic form by the teacher to the student. Direct feedback might take various forms, including crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase or morpheme; inserting a missing word or morpheme; or writing the correct word or form near the erroneous form (Ferris, 2006).
- Indirect Feedback: Indirect feedback occurs when the teacher indicates in some way that an error has been made- by means of an underline, circle, code, or other mark- but does not provide the correct form, leaving the

student to solve the problem that has been called to his or her attention
(Ferris, 2006).

- Comprehensive error feedback: Marking all student errors in writing (Lee, 2003).
- Selective error feedback: Selecting certain types of errors and marking those (Lee, 2003).

Table I.III. *Examples of selective and comprehensive marking*

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| <p>Selective</p> | <p>Many students studying for earn a lot of money <u>becaus</u> ^{sp} if students earn too much money, they have a <u>beatiful</u> ^{sp} social status. Only spelling errors are selected for correction.</p> |
| <p>Comprehensive</p> | <p>^{work} “ My father had to ^{work} there for five years that I also went [□] there with him,” she said very slowly... I had to guess the ^{the} for whole time. I said that I didn’t understand at first [↔] time but I didn’t understand <u>the</u> most of things she said ^{so} that I just moved my head like I knew what she was saying. (Chandler, 2003, p.282)</p> |

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents relevant literature to the issues related with teachers' and students' beliefs and preferences regarding feedback in L2 writing. First, studies looking into the usefulness of feedback are presented. Next, whether the focus and type of teacher feedback create different results is illustrated. In the third part, studies on selective and comprehensive marking are visited. The following part focuses on teachers' thoughts on the seriousness of different error types and their beliefs about and preferences in feedback in L2 writing. Teachers' ideas on the issue of comprehensive and selective marking are given in the fifth part. After reviewing teachers' beliefs and preferences regarding feedback, students' beliefs about the value of feedback are reviewed before looking into the mismatches between teachers' preferences, opinions and practice in feedback providing.

II.I. Is feedback useful?

That providing learners with feedback on grammar does not improve their writing skills, but does harm instead was strongly defended by Truscott (1996), who added that there are serious problems with the feedback teachers provide; for example, they sometimes do not notice the errors or give incorrect feedback. This claim has caused quite a lot of controversy in the field since many teachers provide error feedback for their students. What is more, some other researchers such as Fathman and Whalley (1985), Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) and Ferris (2006) disagree with this claim of Truscott (1996).

Like Truscott (1996), Lalande (1982) illustrated the ineffectiveness of error feedback. He included 12 error types: 11 of them being related to grammar and 1 orthography in his study in which the learners were given feedback on these issues. Gains in this study were reported to be in the orthography level, and the gains in the grammatical categories were nonsignificant. The implication of the study is that the students benefit from error feedback only in terms of orthography (spelling and capitalization). The reason for this, as Truscott (2001) states, may be because these errors are less tied to general principles that are controlled by Universal Grammar (UG). Truscott (2001) suggests that the more strongly an element is controlled by UG, the less chance of changing it through correction exists. As words are usually unique to a language, they are not connected to UG. As UG has little or no part for individual letters or punctuation marks, mistakes in these areas can be corrected through feedback. However, in their claims for the ineffectiveness of feedback, both Truscott (1996) and Lalande (1982) consider feedback which is directed to the accuracy of the language. They do not take comment related feedback into consideration while denying the benefits of feedback. Ferris (1995a) explains that students show differing levels of progress thanks to teacher feedback in their accuracy in writing depending on the error type. However, Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) suggest that any form of feedback is worthwhile and Fathman and Whalley (1985) put forward that students who were given feedback on form improved their writing tasks more than those who were not given any feedback. Ferris (2006) claims that students make use of feedback whatever the nature of feedback is. In order to reveal how feedback should be so as to create

good results, lots of factors pertaining to feedback have been investigated so far. Among them are the focus and type of feedback that is given to students.

II.II. Do the focus and type of feedback matter?

As mentioned before, teachers' perceptions of error gravity are important as they will inevitably play a vital role on the types of feedback given to students. One of the issues about feedback is what teachers focus on in an essay while giving feedback, namely content and organization or accuracy of the language used. In order to find out if the focus of feedback makes a difference in writing performance, a group of students were divided into two and one group was given error correction feedback whereas the second group was given message related feedback. When the groups were compared, it was found that the receivers of the message related feedback made greater higher level propositions in their journal entries than the students that received error correction feedback. Furthermore, the group which received error correction feedback did not produce significantly fewer errors compared to the message related feedback group (Kepner, 1991).

Sheppard (1992) compared a group of learners who received extensive error correction feedback over a 10-week period to another group of students who got only content oriented comments and reported higher results for content oriented comment group in marking sentence boundaries. On accuracy of verb forms, the content group was reported to have obtained nonsignificantly higher scores than the error correction feedback group. One can conclude from the results of the study that providing error correction

feedback is not effective to improve the writing skill and addressing the content or meaning creates positive effects on the development of writing ability.

Similar results were observed by Semke (1984) who observed four groups which received different feedback treatments. The first group was a corrections only group whose mistakes were corrected by the teacher while the second group was a corrections group with comments on content whose mistakes were corrected by the teacher and comments on the content of their essay were provided. The students in the third group were provided with symbols indicating mistakes and were asked to correct their essays themselves and the ones in the last group received only comments on the content of their essay and performed slightly better than the former groups. In addition to that, it was observed that the correction group wrote the essays more slowly and paying more attention to accuracy since they had been trained to do so, still failing to write more accurately than uncorrected students.

A very similar result was found by Fazio (2001) who concluded that all groups; the one that received different forms of error correction and another group that received error correction feedback along with content related feedback showed more decline in their writing performance than the only content related feedback group.

Ashwell (2000) contends that giving content and form feedback together at the same time both in the first and second drafts, giving content feedback in the first and form feedback in the second draft or giving form feedback in the first and content feedback in the second draft did not produce significant differences. This finding contradicts with Zamel's (1985) suggestion that

students receive content related feedback in the first drafts and form feedback in later stages. Ashwell (2000) concludes that feedback on form was more effective to improve structural issues in the texts than providing content related feedback so as to develop the contents of these essays. Still, providing feedback in any forms mentioned above created better results than giving no feedback.

Despite the results suggesting the ineffectiveness of error correction, some researchers argue that students make use of error feedback. Fathman and Whalley (1990) divided 72 intermediate ESL college students into four groups in order to investigate the effects of different feedback treatments. The first group received no feedback, the second group received grammar feedback only while the third group received content feedback only and the fourth group received grammar and content feedback. Grammar feedback was comprised of underlining errors only without giving information about the type of error and content feedback involved general comments that were not specifically directed to the essay at hand, but consisted of positive comments along with general suggestions for improvement like ‘add details’ or ‘develop paragraphs’. The students were asked to write an essay, were given feedback and then were asked to rewrite their essays. When the results were analyzed, it was found out that all four groups including the no feedback group made improvement in their revision; however, students who received any kind of feedback made more progress than those who were not given any feedback. No matter what type of feedback they got, all groups made significant development in the content of their rewrites – but improvement was more when the students

received feedback on content- whereas they improved their grammar significantly only when they received feedback on their grammar mistakes. In the group which received grammar feedback only, all students improved their grammar in the next draft while 44 per cent of them had better content. Of the students who were given feedback only on content the majority developed the content of their essay but only 24 per cent improved their grammar and 35 per cent had lower scores on grammar. This shows that feedback on form was more useful for students in order to improve their grammar in their rewrites than feedback on content so as to improve the content of the essays. In the grammar and content feedback group, all the students made progress in grammar and a great number of them improved the content of their essay. One can conclude from the results that grammar feedback was of more use than content feedback but it must be kept in mind that content feedback in this study was not text specific and as Sommers (1982) puts forward, vague or too general comments on content might cause worse content in the final paper than in the original. It may be claimed that when feedback focuses both on content and language form it favours students. Another thing that must be considered is that this was not a longitudinal study that examined the effects of these differing error treatments over a course of time. The results might be different if long term effects were analysed.

Ferris (1999) discusses that if error correction is selective, prioritised and clear, it helps, or might help at least some students. She further asserts that indirect error correction (identification of errors) is preferable to direct error correction (teacher correcting the student errors). Although it was suggested

that both students and teachers have a preference for direct feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), some other studies reported that indirect feedback led to greater or same levels of accuracy in long term (Lee, 1997; Robb et al., 1986). In another study, it was pointed out that direct error correction led to more correct text revisions than indirect error feedback; however, when long term effects were examined, it was found that students who received indirect error feedback made fewer errors than the students who received direct error feedback (Ferris, 2002 cited in Bitchener et al., 2005). Having divided errors into two as treatable (verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, plural and possessive noun endings, and sentence fragments) and untreatable errors (word choice errors, with the possible exception of some pronoun and preposition uses, and unidiomatic sentence structure, resulting from problems to do with word order and missing or unnecessary words), Ferris (1999) suggests strategy training and direct correction for the untreatable errors whereas the treatable errors should be treated indirectly. She exemplifies her discussion by errors concerning wrong word choice and wrong tense use, classifying them as untreatable and treatable errors respectively, claiming that for the former error type, there are no rules to consult whereas there exist rules for the latter type. Therefore, marking both types of errors by using error codes would not work equally well. Just like Ferris (1999), Kubota (2001) and Myer (1997) suggest that teachers should correct wrong words or phrases because it may be very difficult for students to correct their own mistakes related with use of words since there might not be any materials to consult. In a study where different feedback techniques (direct written corrective feedback and a 5

minute student-researcher conference, direct written corrective feedback only and no corrective feedback on the targeted features- past simple tense, the definite article, prepositions- but only feedback on the quality of content and organization so as to satisfy ethical requirements), two important findings were recorded. The first finding is that written feedback along with oral feedback produced better results than written feedback alone over time. Another finding is related with the areas that were facilitated more by means of feedback. The simple past and the definite article, which are more treatable-rule governed-features were reported to have been improved more than the prepositions, which are less treatable by the combined feedback (Bitchener et al., 2005). That teachers should adopt a selective error feedback and a strategy for building students' awareness and knowledge of their most serious and frequent grammar problems is of great importance is strongly defended by Ferris (1999) who suggests that writing teachers motivate students by asserting that students should be aware of the importance of the accuracy in their texts and ought to develop independent self editing skills.

Ferris (2006) examined if error feedback from instructors helps L2 writers to improve their accuracy in short term and long term. When looked at the short term effects of error feedback, it was clearly seen that students made use of this feedback- regardless of its type- because most of the students corrected their mistakes in the following draft. Of these students, 9.9 per cent edited their mistakes wrongly, and 9.3 per cent made no change. However, as Truscott states “ A learner who understands a comment- well enough even to rewrite the composition correctly- may not grasp the general principle involved

and therefore may repeat the error later in other contexts.” (1996, pp. 350-351). In order to see if this is the case, long term gains of students were examined. The results showed that the students made significant improvement in their accuracy in writing in some categories. Decrease in the number of verb errors was highly significant and the reduction in lexical errors was close to significance at the $p < .05$ confidence level. The scores for articles and sentence structure were worse at the end of the term, though. This supports Ferris (1995a) that students make improvement in accuracy in some error categories.

Truscott (1996) claims that the feedback provided by teachers is usually problematic in that teachers sometimes do not realise errors or they give incorrect feedback. In order to see if this is the case, Ferris (2006) analysed the feedback teachers provided and indicated that 89.4 per cent of the marking done by teachers was correct while 3.6 per cent of it was incorrect and 7 per cent of their marking was unnecessary because no error occurred there. The result is that error feedback in this study was on the whole comprehensive and accurate. In the same study, the strategies teachers used to give feedback and their effects were also examined and it was revealed that teachers used direct feedback in which they provided the correct form for students in more than 45 per cent of the cases, and indirect feedback including underlining or circling the errors and providing an error code was used in more than half of the cases. The 88 per cent of the students who received direct feedback were reported to make correct revisions while some of these students made incorrect revisions or did no change. However, when the revision made by students who received

incorrect feedback was examined, it was revealed that 77 per cent of them made correct revisions whereas the rest made incorrect revision or made no change. Interestingly enough, indirect feedback without error codes or with codes not on the list previously designed to be obeyed led to nearly as much correction as the error markings with codes. Even inaccurate error codes helped students and most of the errors marked with incorrect codes were correctly changed.

When students' revision outcomes for different error types were examined, it was seen that the highest rate of correct change was in the run-ons and spelling whereas the students were least successful at revising errors related with idioms and subject-verb agreement. This finding is of great importance since it is an indication of the fact that students' short term gains- from one draft to the next one- are not in parallel with their long term gains- over the course of semester-. When the long term gains students had were analysed, it was seen that they made the most progress in "verb" category (including errors in both tense and form) whereas they made less successful editions in these error types from one draft to the next. On the contrary, students were quite good at revising sentence structure errors (84.3 %) in the short term while they were not able to make any progress in reducing the number of sentence structure errors in their writings in the long term. When the feedback given to these error types was scrutinized, it was found out that while most (75 per cent) of verb errors were marked indirectly, this was the case for only few (15 per cent) of sentence structure errors. As a result, students' success in revising sentence structure errors from one draft to the next can be

attributable to the feedback type they received. However, this direct feedback did not help them as much as indirect feedback in long term, here proving the higher effectiveness of indirect feedback -which erratically called errors to students' attention- in long run.

What techniques writing teachers (should) use while giving feedback is an important issue as well as if it should be given or not. Effects of different feedback treatments; errors marked with codes, errors underlined but not labelled and no error feedback, were analysed and it was reported that both error feedback groups performed significantly better than no feedback group. No significant difference in the performance of two different feedback groups was reported (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Like Ferris & Roberts (2001), Robb et al. (1986) found no significant difference between the group given coded feedback and the group that was not given coded feedback.

Students in two upper intermediate classes at Middle East Technical University in the Department of Basic English were given feedback using different methods. In one of the groups, the teacher wrote short comments on content and organization; but underlined all the structural mistakes (mistakes of grammar, vocabulary and mechanics) and used error codes. In another group, the teacher also wrote short comments on organization and content. However, in the second group, a few important and most frequent grammar mistakes were chosen and summative feedback explaining why they were mistakes was written and the students were reminded the rules, given an example and asked to correct their mistakes. This procedure lasted eight weeks. After the treatment, a test in order to evaluate the students' progress and proficiency in

the use of accurate language in writing was given to students. The analysis showed that the differing feedback types did not yield significantly different results (Tümekaya, 2003). The results support the findings of Robb et al. (1986) who argued that the effort put by teachers while giving feedback does not always equal the improvement students make at the end. Although the teacher in one of the groups worked more to identify all the errors and used codes for them as well as comments on organization and content, the students did not produce better works than the students in the other group.

Three groups of upper intermediate level students studying at Preparatory School of TOBB University of Economics and Technology were given different types of feedback on their essays during eight weeks in order to see if different feedback treatments on mechanical errors would lead to significant improvement in student writing. In one group, the instructor underlined all the mistakes in essays and gave the correct form for each mistake. In the second group, the instructor only underlined mistakes without giving correct forms whereas in the last group mistakes were underlined and error codes were provided. After eight weeks, each student took a test and the results of the test showed that differing feedback treatments did not lead to significant difference in improving student writing in terms of accuracy, again confirming the findings of Tümekaya (2003), Robb et al. (1986). However, when students' improvement on a weekly base was examined, it was found that the group receiving error codes made more improvement than the other two groups, not significantly, though (Eylenen, 2008).

Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) review research related with hypothesis on differing ways of responding to students writing. Studies contrasting responses of praise with response of criticism; the effects of responding to writing orally with responding in written form; attending to form with attending to content; effects of providing the correct forms with suggesting clues for errors (such as codes for error types) and offering rules are reviewed and they conclude that none of these differing ways of responding to student writing proved significantly advantageous in students' subsequent writing (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981; cited in Leki, 1990).

Table II. I. *Results concerning the focus and type of feedback*

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|--|
| Kepner | 1991 | Message related | Message related feedback proved more useful for the success in subsequent writings. |
| Sheppard | 1992 | feedback vs. Error | |
| Semke | 1984 | correction | |
| Fazio | 2001 | | |
| Fathman and Whalley | 1990 | Form feedback vs. | Form feedback was more useful to develop form than content feedback was to develop content in second draft. |
| Ashwell | 2001 | Message related feedback | |
| Ferris | 2002 | Direct vs. Indirect | Direct feedback was more useful in short term whereas in long term indirect feedback proved more beneficial. |
| Ferris | 2006 | feedback | |
| Bitchener et al. | 2005 | Usefulness of feedback | Students gain improvement in accuracy in some categories. |
| Ferris | 2006 | | |
| Ferris and Roberts | 2001 | Effects of different | No significant difference was found between the groups receiving different feedback techniques. However, all groups were more successful than the no feedback group. |
| Robb et al. | 1986 | feedback types on | |
| Tüm kaya | 2003 | student success | |
| Eylenen | 2008 | | |
| Knoblauch and Brannon | 1981 | | |

Having reviewed related studies, one can conclude that the focus of teacher feedback matters in that in many cases indirect feedback proves more advantageous than direct feedback. Furthermore, in some studies attending to content produced better results than attending to form although this was not the case in some other surveys. However, paying attention to and providing

feedback on both form and content is suggested since this is also preferred by students. What is more, it was reported in almost all studies that different feedback techniques do not create significantly different effects. This finding is of great importance since writing teachers really spend quite a long time responding to student writings. Some feedback techniques take longer time and may be harder than others, and when the fact that a type of error feedback does not ensure greater success than the others, it may be assumed that the effort teachers make while giving feedback using different techniques does not equal the achievement students may attain in their subsequent writings.

II.III. Selective vs comprehensive feedback

As can be inferred from the conclusions of Ferris (1999) that a selective, prioritised and clear feedback helps some students, one of the key factors in error correction/ feedback is the issue of selective or comprehensive error correction/feedback. Lee (2003) defines comprehensive error feedback as a concept which is based on the assumption that error free writing is a desirable goal and when teachers adopt comprehensive marking, they mark all student errors regardless of the type of error, including writing style as well as grammatical errors. That the comprehensive, or unfocused, error feedback is exhausting for teachers and frustrating for students (Enginarlar; 1993, Lee; 2003) has also been supported by one of the teachers whom Zamel (1985) interviewed in the quotation given below.

Whenever ESL writing students have turned in their compositions to me, I have felt a rush of mixed emotions: excitement at the prospect of reading their ideas, but at the same time utter dread of the monumental task of dealing with all those errors! I usually start out with good intentions of focusing primarily on the students' message

and attending to only the "most important" errors; but all too often, I end up plowing through each paper, systematically circling, crossing out, putting brackets around, and/or revising every usage error I find. A few days later, the students get back a paper "of a different color [ink] from what they originally wrote," (according to my Vietnamese students). They read through the corrected paper once, (if I'm lucky), making mental note of the errors, (with or without understanding; to be filed in short-term memory), and then put away (or throw away?) that completed venture, ready to try their luck again at the next assignment. (Zamel, 1985, p:93-94)

Selective error correction is when the teachers select specific errors for correction and ignore other errors in the texts. There are levels of selective or focused error feedback. Highly focused corrective feedback refers to the cases where teachers choose only one type of errors to be given feedback whereas less focused corrective feedback targets more than one error type but still restricts feedback to a limited number of error types. Ellis et al. (2008) state theoretical reasons for believing that focused feedback is more efficient than unfocused feedback. Learners are likely to develop a better understanding of the nature of errors and the correction needed as they attend to corrections on a single or limited types of errors.

Since attention and understanding are the key issues for acquisition, focused feedback is more likely to bring about desired results. In order to test this theory, Ellis et al. (2008) tested three groups on a pre-test, immediate post-test (post- test 1) and delayed post-test (post- test 2). One experimental group was given focused feedback on the use of articles for first and second mention, another experimental group received unfocused feedback (feedback directed at various linguistic errors as well as articles), and a control group received no

error feedback. The result of the study showed that all three groups made improvements in their use of articles to express first and second mention from the pre-test to post-test 1. Nevertheless, the control group's accuracy declined and the unfocused group did not differ in accuracy between the post-test 1 and post-test 2 while the focused group continued to gain in accuracy. This proves that students make more use of selective error feedback in the long run.

Different from Ellis et al. (2008), Hendrickson (1981) stated that selective error feedback was not more advantageous than comprehensive error feedback. He divided 24 students in two groups one of which received selective error feedback which was directed to global errors- errors that hinder communication-. The other group was given comprehensive feedback on local errors- errors that do not destroy the intelligibility of utterances. Both groups were given a test before they were provided with aforementioned feedback procedures which lasted 6 weeks. After 6 weeks both groups took a test of which results were compared with the results of the pre-test. It was found that the treatments did not yield significant effects in reducing the number of global and local errors. Wong (2007) reports very similar findings in his study in which one group received comprehensive error feedback while another group received selective error feedback on verb errors, punctuation errors and agreement errors (errors that were most frequent in earlier writings of the group). The errors were marked by using error codes and the study lasted 8 months and when the results were obtained, it was seen that different treatments did not produce different results.

In spite of controversial results, many researchers believe that not all errors in an essay should be corrected and feedback is more beneficial when it is conducted systematically and selectively. These researchers present some criteria as to how to select errors to attend to. It is a common belief among researchers and educators that those errors which are related to the subject under focus in classes recently, those that occur frequently and hinder communication should be given attention in feedback providing process because among these are some types of errors that hold higher priorities for correction than others. Another important point is that comprehensive feedback is exhausting for teachers and overwhelming, discouraging and demoralizing for students (Ferris, 2002; Ur, 1996; Walz, 1982; Hammerly, 1991; Celce-Muria, 1985).

Table II.II. *Results concerning selective and comprehensive marking*

| | | | |
|--------------|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ellis et al. | 2008 | Selective vs. Comprehensive marking | Students make more use of selective error feedback in long run |
| Hendrickson | 1981 | Selective vs. Comprehensive marking | No significantly different effects were found. |
| Wong | 2007 | | |

Like other important issues related with feedback, the question of whether to implement selective or comprehensive feedback to help students more could not be given a definite answer. Having a look at what teachers prefer to do or really do while giving feedback as well as what they think about the gravity of several error types found in student writing is necessary, though. This way, one can wonder why different feedback treatments are still implemented despite the lack of advantage of a feedback type over others.

II.IV. How do L2 writing teachers prioritise errors and what are their preferences and opinions regarding feedback?

One of the factors that plays an important role on the gravity attached to error types lies in the characteristics of the evaluators, mainly if they are native speakers of the language or not. Hyland & Anan (2006) mention in their study which was conducted in order to find out the priorities of teachers regarding the problems in an essay that native speakers of English were more tolerant in grading errors compared to non-native speakers who focused on the violation of rules while judging the importance of errors. The most disturbing errors found in the essays of the students were agreement and word form errors for non-native teachers who justified their choice saying that these were violating the very basic grammar rules that the students had to get right as a result of the focused instruction in classes. For the native English teachers, tense and word order errors were of more importance because these errors had a greater impact on the intelligibility of the utterances, thus having the potential risk of not being able to convey the intended meaning.

Another striking finding is that language teachers consider themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers in that they concentrate primarily on surface level features of writing and read and respond to texts as a series of separate sentences rather than as a whole discourse. As a result, they are so put off by the existence of local problems and attend to correct them that unintentionally they cannot realize much larger meaning related problems (Zamel, 1985). It is further stated by Zamel (1985) that as they are so concentrated on single sentences, sometimes their feedback concerning these sentences is incorrect since they have not focused on the writer's message,

which requires a different correction. This does not mean, however, that the teachers never pay attention to issues of content and organization. Zamel points out that they do, but the teachers she investigated were not good at responding to content and organization because their feedback was either too vague or contradictory. The teachers addressed these issues sometimes in the margin, but most of the time at the very end of the text, after polishing the text by correcting, identifying or reacting to local errors. One of the teachers involved in this study even claimed that meaning cannot or should not be dealt with when the grammar is full of mistakes commenting that the student should “try to learn rewriting how he should express his ideas in clearer and more correct language” and advised the student not to “try to change or improve the content”. Sommers (1982) also reports that teacher comments are vague and not text specific so students’ revisions do not show much improvement and some essays become worse than the original after the rewriting process.

Robb, Ross & Shortreed (1986) draw attention to the fact that teachers respond most frequently to mechanical errors by citing the result of the study of Applebee (1981), who concluded that 80% of the teachers ranked mechanical errors as the most important criterion for responding to student writing (Applebee, 1981; as cited in Robb, et al., 1986)

Teachers’ priorities and ideas on the seriousness of problems are really significant since a teacher’s opinions regarding this issue play a big role in students’ attitudes to writing. When students are given back their essays and see that all or a great number of comments -or feedback-are on mechanical errors, they may think that accuracy of the language in a piece of text is the

most important component of writing. The result might be that their first concern in writing is a good use of the language, leaving the conveyance of the message in the second place. They may also think that their message or ideas are not given any attention by the teacher who only cares about the use of language.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) looked into the feedback practices of two teachers teaching advanced writing in an EFL institute and at a Brazilian university. The teacher working in the EFL institute marked 11 student essays while the one working at the university marked 13 compositions. These teachers were asked to think aloud while marking the essays and giving feedback. The teacher working in the EFL institute reported paying attention to mechanics, grammar, vocabulary and organization, but not content since not attending to content was an institutional preference as it was not assessed in the proficiency exam. This teacher thought that students made most use of comments on mechanics, grammar and organization. What is more, she preferred using error codes to indicate the mistakes in student writings but avoided correcting the errors. Her comments were directed to the problems in the essays rather than praising the strengths of them. When her markings were investigated in detail, it was found out that the teachers had given most feedback on vocabulary followed by grammar and mechanics. She provided the least feedback on organization in spite of the fact that she thought students benefited a lot from the comments on organization. The same essays were later analysed by the investigators who made more comments on organization than the teacher. The students studying in this institute contended that the comments

of their teacher were mostly about mechanics and grammar, some concerned vocabulary and few related to organization. They added that they wanted their teacher to give feedback on content and provide more comments on organization. Furthermore, they reported understanding the teacher's comments but having problems handling with 25 per cent of her comments.

The teacher working in the university EFL context reported focusing on all five categories- grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, organization and content, putting more emphasis on content. She thought that students gained most assistance from comments related with organization. She stated that she frequently indicated the existence of a problem, sometimes indicated the type of it and sometimes corrected it. When her feedback in the essays was examined, it was seen that she had provided most comments on organization and content followed by grammar, mechanics and vocabulary. All comments except for one were related with the problems rather than the strengths of the essays and most of the time problems were signalled without providing the types of them. The students in the institution asserted that their teacher made most comments on organization and content, with some students stating that they also received a lot of feedback on grammar. They added that they wanted more comments on content, vocabulary and organization. What is more, they declared that they liked hearing positive comments about the content of their compositions. These students admitted that they did not understand 46 per cent of the teacher's comments and they did not know how to handle 56 per cent of these comments.

Teachers may adopt different techniques to provide feedback for their students. Among the frequently used techniques are: a) indicating errors, b) indicating errors and correcting them, c) indicating errors and categorizing them using a marking code, d) hinting at the location of errors (putting a mark in the margin to show that there is a mistake on a specific line), e) hinting at the location of errors and categorising them using a marking code and f) indicating errors and writing comments about them.

Lee (2003) investigated teachers' feedback strategies and it was reported that 87% of the teachers used a marking code while marking student writings. Eight per cent of the teachers were obliged to use codes because of school regulations. Most of the teachers stated that they were content with using codes although some problems regarding using codes were mentioned in the interviews. Some of the problems mentioned are as follows:

- Sometimes the marking codes can't be applied to syntax level errors.
- Sometimes it's difficult to categorize the errors according to the marking code.
- When students don't understand the codes, they come to ask me individually. I'd rather correct the errors for them because I don't want all of them to come out and ask for the corrections.
- Weaker students don't know how to use the marking code. (Lee, 2003, p:223)

Twenty teachers working at the Preparatory school of Başkent University were given ten student compositions to grade and these teachers were interviewed about the factors that affected their grading of compositions. After teachers graded each composition, they were requested to state what made them take off grades in these compositions. It was found that all language teachers considered grammar, organization, content, vocabulary and mechanics. To be able to fully grasp the teachers' priorities, they were asked to

rank content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics in order of importance. The majority of teachers ranked content as the most important component of essays and there were some teachers who thought organization and grammar were the most significant components. A smaller number of teachers gave priority to mechanics, and vocabulary. When teachers' opinions about the second important component were examined, the results showed that organization was considered to be the second significant feature. It was followed by grammar, vocabulary content and mechanics. When the teachers' choices regarding the importance of different components were analysed, it was seen that there were discrepancies among the teachers. This may stem from the fact that the educational backgrounds and experience of teachers varied. When the experience of the teachers was taken into account while analysing their priorities and concerns regarding the components of writing, it was revealed that experienced teachers were more sensitive to language mistakes like grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. However, novice teachers were more concerned with organization and content. This may be because the experienced have come across so many language mistakes during their professional lives that they cannot put up with them anymore as Ersen (2000) suggests. The novice were usually taught writing in a system where organization and content were given more importance than the time when experienced teachers were taught how to write. This may be a reason why the novice give priority to content and organization. When specific features in each component were considered, the teachers' top ten priorities rank ordered according to the teachers' answers were as follows:

1. organization of the paragraphs
2. appropriacy of the grammatical errors to the target language
3. variety in the clause and phrase structures
4. parts of the composition (introduction, development and conclusion)
5. having a clearly stated thesis statement
6. range of vocabulary used
7. the number and maturity of the major and minor supports
8. simplicity and complexity of the sentences
9. accuracy of the vocabulary
10. the use of linking words and cohesive devices (Ersen, 2000)

When a group of fifteen teachers were asked for their preferences regarding the use of error codes or reformulation to give feedback, ten of them favoured the use of codes adding that they might provide reformulation when students do not know the correct form or would need further help from the teacher if they are provided with error codes. Furthermore, these teachers would use reformulation when the error was a simple one like subject-verb agreement. Twelve of the teachers stated that they would mark all the errors in a piece of writing unless the meaning is unclear, errors are repeated and found in abundance. Only two teachers thought that comprehensive marking would make students discouraged. One of the teachers admitted that sometimes focusing on micro level mistakes would cause them to forget about or ignore macro level problems and suggested marking only very important mistakes. Eight of the teachers were asked to use reformulation and they believe that reformulation provides students with a correct model and enables them to reach the corrections they need immediately. Three of the teachers found this method exhausting and time consuming. That this method does not work when the students' intended meaning is not clear and that reformulation is spoon feeding as it does not lead students to think about mistakes are other disadvantages stated by the teachers. Of fifteen teachers, seven were requested to use error

codes and they believe that as this method makes students think about their mistakes, it is useful. However, it takes some time students to work out the problems. The teachers sometimes experience disagreement among them on the code to be used and cannot find suitable codes for some mistakes. As a further disadvantage, the teachers report that sometimes students do not correct their mistakes by means of codes and do not need to ask for help if they are not instructed to resubmit their written works. Then, the teachers will have to reformulate (Agosti, 2006).

Table II.III. *Results concerning teachers' priorities and feedback preferences*

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|---|--|
| Hyland and Anan | 2006 | Teachers' prioritising of errors | Non-natives tend to be harsher in their judgement of the importance of errors. |
| Applebee | 1981 | | Teachers attend to mechanical errors most of the time. |
| Ersen | 2000 | | All teachers take grammar, organization, content, vocabulary and mechanics into account while evaluating essays. They view content as the most important criterion and this is followed by organization and grammar, mechanics and lastly, vocabulary. |
| Zamel | 1985 | Teachers' prioritising of errors and their feedback | Teachers are so concentrated on single sentences and local errors that their feedback is sometimes incorrect since the meaning to be conveyed there requires a different correction. |
| Cohen and Cavalcanti | 1990 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teachers' prioritising of mistakes and their feedback may change according to the test students are going to take. -There may be mismatches between teachers' beliefs and performances. -There may be mismatches between students' expectations and teachers' performances. -Students may not understand teachers' feedback or know how to make corrections. |

Table II.III. (continued)

| | | | |
|--------|------|--------------------------------|---|
| Lee | 2003 | Teachers' feedback preferences | Most of the teachers use error codes. Although they are pleased with them, they also report disadvantages of using them. |
| Agosti | 2006 | | Many teachers favour using error codes and state its advantages. However, they are well aware of the disadvantages. They add that they would use reformulation under some circumstances. Most of the teachers are in favour of comprehensive marking and only a few of them think it is discouraging. |

When the results are closely investigated, it is seen that there is a mismatch between students' expectations from teachers regarding feedback and the feedback provided by teachers. Students state that they want their teachers to give more feedback on content and organization whereas most of teacher feedback is on mechanical issues such as grammar, spelling and punctuation. This may be because of the fact that as Zamel (1985) points out, writing teachers consider themselves as language teachers and for them error free writing is desirable. For these teachers, issues regarding content and organization may also be important but the presence of inaccurate language may make them annoyed and they focus on them before anything else. They may also believe that once a student manages to get rid of these structural mistakes, it will be easy for them to convey their message. However, when there are so many language mistakes, it becomes very hard to focus on the intended message. Another reason might be the effect of tests on the courses, namely washback. If accuracy of language rather than the quality of ideas and the way they are presented are given higher scores in tests student take,

teachers may act accordingly and attach more importance to mistakes of language use.

II.V. What do teachers think about selective and comprehensive marking?

Sixteen Japanese teachers of English were given a questionnaire and the results showed that teachers attached great importance to comprehensive approach to error correction, perhaps reflecting both a professional preference as a result of the idea that finding and correcting errors is a central part of their role or institutional imposition to mark every error (Hyland and Anan, 2006).

Lee (2003) investigated beliefs and problems regarding error feedback of 206 English teachers working in Hong Kong by using a questionnaire and follow up telephone interviews. Among his findings was that in spite of the fact that in the English syllabus for secondary teachers of Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council, 1999) the Education Department states that teachers need not correct all mistakes in learners' work, and recommends selective error correction, majority of teachers marked all student errors. Of 19 teachers who were interviewed on phone, 12 were practising comprehensive marking, but interestingly, they said that they would prefer selective marking. That some teachers think that selective marking is hard to perform because teachers do not know how to go about it may explain why teachers still adopt comprehensive marking even though they believe that selective marking is favourable. Among the reasons why they carried out comprehensive marking were the following:

- Teachers want to look at the overall performance of students.
- The errors made by junior form students are basic and have to be pointed out.
- When the compositions are not too long comprehensive marking is manageable.

- Students prefer comprehensive marking to selective marking.
- Teachers are considered lazy if they do not mark all student errors.
- Students have to rely on teachers to tell them what errors they have made.
- If teachers don't mark all errors, students do not know what kinds of errors they have made.
- It is the teachers' duty to mark all student errors.
- Parents want teachers to mark all errors. (Lee, 2003, p:221)

Of these 19 teachers, 7 were conducting selective error marking and their beliefs were as follows:

- It can save time.
- Students can focus on specific areas.
- Compositions are long.
- Heavy workload leads us to it.
- Even if teachers mark all errors, students will still make the same errors next time/students are not learning from their errors.
- Students cannot remember what teachers have marked.
- Marking all errors cannot really help students improve grammatical accuracy.
- Teachers are not marking machines. They should spend more time on teaching and lesson preparation.
- Students are not happy when they get back their compositions full of red marks.
- Not all students can handle comprehensive marking—e.g., for those students who have a large number of errors in writing, comprehensive marking is overwhelming and demotivating. (Lee, 2003, p:221-222)

Lee (2003) further states that even the teachers who indicated that they used selective marking are not selective enough as they mostly marked 2/3 or above of errors. When these teachers were asked about their major principle for selective marking, many of them said that they chose the errors selected on any one occasion randomly, while teachers of lower levels selected errors directly linked to grammar instruction. A relatively low percentage of teachers indicated that their major principle for error selection was connected with the students' specific needs, as the Education Department recommends. The findings of Lee (2003) have indicated that a lot of teachers in Hong Kong do

not know much about how to implement selective marking which has proved to be more advantageous (Lee, 2003, p.218).

Table II.IV. *Teachers' ideas concerning selective and comprehensive marking*

| | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Hyland and Anan | 2006 | Selective vs. Comprehensive marking | Teachers attach great importance to comprehensive marking believing that correcting mistakes is a part of their role. |
| Lee | 2003 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Most of the teachers mark all student mistakes. -Some teachers who implement comprehensive marking prefer selective marking but admit not knowing how to do it. -Reasons for both comprehensive and selective marking are given by teachers. -Even teachers who state that they are using selective marking are not selective enough. |

When teachers' reasons why they conduct comprehensive marking are studied, it is clear that not only their own preference but also the wishes of students and parents are taken into account. Although it is stated by many researchers that comprehensive marking is demotivating for students (Enginarlar; 1993, Ferris; 2002, Lee; 2003) there are some students who want their teachers to mark all their errors. These students may think that knowing all their mistakes will help them to get rid of these mistakes in their subsequent writings though it is also bothersome. To see if this is really the case, it is essential the feedback preferences and opinions of students are investigated. When this is surveyed, it may be possible to see if the opinions and preferences of teachers and students match.

II.VI. What are students' beliefs on the value of feedback?

Another important issue which received relatively little attention regarding feedback is what students think about the utility and value of the feedback they receive. It is important to have an idea about students' opinions and preferences regarding feedback and feedback types along with their reasons in order to create a mutually appreciated feedback procedure from which students feel that they make use of. Knowing about students' preferences and ideas is of great significance since teachers can use this knowledge so as to motivate their students to write more and better in the foreign language.

Students who received feedback in the form of abbreviated code system for errors related to surface grammar, lexis and mechanics, some symbols indicating problems in coherence, unity and clarity, brief comments on the content and organization of the essay and some general comments on students' paragraph and longitudinal progress over the course of time evaluated this feedback procedure. They viewed this procedure as necessary and useful and stated that they had benefited from this procedure in terms of both grammar and mechanics and composition skills. It was revealed in the study that students like teacher feedback which pays attention to linguistic errors, provides guidance on compositional skills and includes evaluative comments on content and quality of writing. (Enginarlar, 1993)

Students studying at TOBB University of Economics and Technology stated that they liked receiving feedback on every mistake they made and many of them favoured a feedback procedure in which the teacher provided correct

forms. The most favoured feedback type was the coded feedback because they knew types of their mistakes compared to when the mistakes were underlined without illustrating the type of mistakes present in the essay. However, there were some students who admitted not understanding the error codes used. The students whose mistakes were only underlined reported that they did not like this feedback procedure because they could not understand what the mistake was (Eylenen, 2008)

After a ten week period of implementing two feedback types- namely self correction code and teacher reformulation- students' and teachers' beliefs about the utility and disadvantages of the two methods were examined. In the first feedback procedure, the teacher illustrated the location of the error and wrote the error type by using error codes. In the latter type, the teacher wrote the correct forms to replace errors. The aim of this method was to free the written work of students from structural errors and provide the students with necessary vocabulary which they lacked. As for the students' general preferences of feedback, it was reported that they attached more importance to teachers' marking grammar and vocabulary errors rather than spelling and punctuation errors. What is more, students wanted their teachers to mark all or most of their errors. Students perceived the feedback types as affecting grammar, word usage and learning to write almost equally. However, they believed that reformulation is more beneficial in order to improve vocabulary and punctuation (Agosti, 2006).

Coşkun (2007) surveyed the preferences of students for error correction. His participants were fourth-year students of Department of Foreign Languages

Education at Abant İzzet Baysal University and Hacettepe University in Turkey. This study is really important because these students were teacher candidates and their feedback preferences and feelings about the importance of different types of errors would play a role in their teaching practice. A great number of these students regarded having as few errors as possible in their writings as either very important or important. This opinion of the students can well be understood when it is taken into account that quite a big number of these students hold the idea that having as few errors as possible is again either very important or important to their teachers. When looked at these results, it may be stated that when error free writing is the goal of teachers, it turns out that it becomes the goal of students, too. Majority of these students think that grammatical errors should be marked by teachers (more than half of them think this is very important and 30 % regard it as very important). Similarly, students like their errors in spelling and vocabulary choice being pointed out. Of 60 students participating in the study, 38, 3 % think that it is important that errors in vocabulary choice should be marked and 31, 7 % of them consider it as very important. As for errors in spelling, 33, 3 % of students think that pointing out errors is important and 23, 3 % consider it as very important. Unlike the results mentioned, the option 'sometimes important' ranks top; showing that marking errors in punctuation is given less importance by the students.

When how often these students look carefully at comments in different areas, including content, organization and the language is analysed, it is revealed that comments related with the organizations of the essays are given the highest attention; with 63, 3 % of students claiming that they always look at

the comments on organization. Marks on content, grammar, vocabulary choice, spelling and punctuation follow comments on organization. This suggests that for these students not only form but also content and organization is important.

Another important finding is that 33,3 % of the students want their teachers to mark all errors the teachers considers major, but not minor ones, thus expressing a wish for selective marking. The next most preferred way is comprehensive marking and 31, 7 % of students want all their errors to be marked. In addition to that, majority of the students favour direct error feedback and want the teachers to provide them with the correct form. A slightly smaller number of the students want the location of errors to be shown and like to be given a clue about how to correct them. In contrast to Truscott (1993), who defends that the teachers should ignore the errors in student writing and focus on ideas expressed, none of the students in this study ask for it. The findings related to direct error correction are again in contrast with the suggestions of Ferris (2003) who claims that errors should be marked but correct forms should be found by the students. She puts forward that in long term students benefit more from indirect error feedback. The preference for direct correction is followed by correction done using symbols or codes and underlining. Conferencing is not preferred as much as these ones and finally the idea of receiving no feedback in their writing is not wanted by the students.

Many of the students state that they look at every mark written by teacher carefully and of those who say look some marks more carefully than others, many prefer paying attention to marks indicating errors in grammar, slightly fewer pays more attention to marks showing errors in vocabulary choice and

only few consider marks suggesting errors in punctuation as important. These students express a preference for teacher help or guidance rather than other sources such as reference books or peers (Coşkun, 2007).

Semke (1984) reports that students resent having errors pointed out for them for correction whereas they have a positive attitude towards teacher feedback when they receive supportive comments without marking errors.

Radecki and Swales (1988) investigated the preferences and views on feedback of a group of students studying at the University of Michigan. A total of 59 students took part in the study and these students were registered to 4 different upper level courses. A majority of these students expressed positive or at least neutral reactions on receiving their papers heavily marked regardless of the sort of markings. They reported their contentment at knowing their mistakes and having a chance to correct them. However, they also explained that the grades they got were of more importance to them than the comments on the paper and as a result first looked at the grades before the comments. In addition to this, most of them were pleased with the errors codes used on their papers. More significant and widespread than these things they had in common mentioned above were the differences between the participants. The participants in the study were divided into three categories according to their views and preferences on feedback: Receptors (46 %), Semi-resistors (41 %), and Resistors (13 %). The groups are formed according to students' differing attitudes to different types of comments, the marking and correcting language use errors, the area of teacher interference, revision and their sensitivity to the expectations of writing teachers.

When the marking preferences of these students were examined, it was revealed that both Receptors and Semi-resistors preferred comments that were specific to the content but they also found one-word judgements valuable. Especially Receptors wanted their teachers to attend to content of their essays both in terms of the quality of their ideas and accuracy of the facts given in the essay. Another point Receptors and Semi-resistors had in common was that both yearned for all their linguistic errors to be marked by teachers, illustrating their belief that error marking was a foremost responsibility of teachers. On the contrary, The Resistors favoured short evaluative comments along with a grade, or only a grade. Only half of the Resistors liked only very important errors to be marked for them.

In terms of beliefs on the correction of linguistic errors, the Receptors stated that the students should make an effort to correct their own mistakes and only those mistakes that cannot be corrected by students should be put right by teachers. Semi-resistors gave a lot of different answers to the questions on this issue. These answers changed according to the course level they were registered to. The majority of Resistors thought that it was teachers' responsibility to correct student errors.

As for students' opinions on the rewriting of essays, it was clear that Receptors, who favoured to concentrate on organization and then on grammatical, lexical and spelling errors in their revision, happily rewrote their essays whereas Semi-resistors and Resistors saw no value in rewriting and regarded rewriting as a punishment. They mostly perceived the task of

rewriting as only rectification of surface level errors (Radecki & Swales, 1988).

As can be inferred from the studies mentioned above, students, especially the ones in Turkey, want their teachers to mark either all errors or all the major errors. This preference is not parallel with the suggestions of many researchers (Ferris; 2002, Ellis et al; 2008) that selective marking is preferable to comprehensive marking since it produces better results. This may be the reason why a lot of teachers still conduct comprehensive marking although it is harder to implement (Zamel; 1985, Lee; 2003). The preference of students that teachers should carry out comprehensive marking may stem from the fact that they expect their essays to be mistake-free as teachers appreciate student writings which are completely accurate. These students also welcome a feedback procedure that focuses on both surface level mistakes and problems related with content and organization of essays. In addition to these, two types of feedback are most appreciated by the students. The first of these is direct feedback in which teacher corrects the mistakes for students. Another feedback technique liked by the students is a type of indirect feedback which is comprised of teacher's illustrating the mistakes and providing clues for the types of them by using error codes in spite of the fact that some students cannot figure out what these codes mean. They do not like teacher's underlining mistakes without pointing out their types as they have difficulties understanding what their mistakes are.

Table II.V. *Students' preferences regarding feedback*

| Author | Year | Topic | Findings |
|--------------------|------|--------------------------------|---|
| Enginarlar | 1993 | Students' feedback preferences | Feedback should call attention to linguistic errors, provide guidance on compositional skills and include evaluative comments on content and quality of writing. |
| Eylenen | 2008 | | -Students are in favour of comprehensive marking. -They like seeing codes for their mistakes although some of them admit not understanding them. |
| Agosti | 2006 | | -Another favoured feedback technique is being provided with the correct forms. -Students attach more importance to teachers' marking grammar and vocabulary errors than spelling and punctuation errors. -Students like comprehensive marking -Codes and reformulation are equally useful to grammar and learning to write, but reformulation is more beneficial to improve vocabulary and punctuation. |
| Coşkun | 2007 | | -Error free writing is the goal of students. -Grammatical errors are perceived as the most important by the students who think they should be marked by the teacher. This is followed by vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. -Students pay highest attention to comments on organization and content and these are followed by grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. -Most students want their major mistakes to be pointed out but not minor ones while slightly less students favour comprehensive marking. |
| Semke | 1984 | | - Most students are in favour of direct marking and slightly less number likes to be shown the location of errors and given a clue about how to make correction. |
| Radecki and Swales | 1988 | | Students like to receive supportive comments without marking errors. -Students are pleased to know their mistakes and have a chance to correct them. However, they state that they look at their grades before the feedback on their papers. -Most students are happy with the error codes. -Most students want their teachers to comment on the content of the essays as |

Table II.V.(continued)

well as to mark all the mistakes.
-Some students want to correct their mistakes themselves whereas very few are in favour of teacher correction.

Having gone over teachers' preferences and opinions about the seriousness of errors and implementation of feedback and believing that teachers' beliefs would play a role in their feedback practice, a close look at what they really do while providing feedback for their students is needed. This way one can understand if teachers really do what they believe should be done, and if not, why there are controversies.

II.VII. Are L2 writing teachers' preferences and opinions on error gravity and feedback compatible with their feedback practice?

Lee (2009) lists some mismatches between teachers' beliefs and feedback practice based on the findings of Lee (2003). Among these mismatches are:

- **Teachers pay most attention to language form but they believe there's more to good writing than accuracy.**

When teachers were interviewed, all of them said that good writing depends on development of ideas and organization as well as accuracy. However, their feedback to student writing showed that 94.1 % of the teacher feedback was directed at language form, and only 3.8 % was on content and 0.4 % was on organization.

- **Teachers tend to correct and locate errors for students but believe that through teacher feedback students should learn to correct and locate their own errors.**

The results of the questionnaire showed that a great number of teachers believed that students ought to gain the ability to locate and correct errors; however, in the feedback analysis it was revealed that about most of the feedback was direct, because teachers indicated and corrected errors themselves.

- **Although teachers mostly prefer selective marking, they mark student errors comprehensively.**

In spite of the fact that the majority of teachers (12 out of 19) said that they preferred selective marking which they thought was preferable to comprehensive marking as marking all mistakes was harder for teachers and demotivating for students, many teachers implemented comprehensive marking saying that it was because of the school policy, wish of students and parents and not knowing how to mark selectively.

- **Despite the fact that all students cannot make use of error codes, teachers prefer to use them.**

A great many of teachers go on using error codes although they believe some students, especially the weaker ones, are not so good at deciphering what these codes mean. They added that sometimes students understand what these codes mean but they cannot figure out how to correct their mistakes. They defended their preference saying that using codes lead students to think about their errors and self correction, which is helpful for them.

- **Teachers know that they should focus on both the strengths and weaknesses of the student essays but they mainly respond to weaknesses.**

When the feedback practice of the teachers was analysed, it was revealed that only 3.3 % of the feedback was the comments praising the strengths of the essays. Actually, only 8.6 % of the feedback was comments made up of criticism and praise. The focus of the feedback was on the problems of language use. When interviewed, teachers said that they were well aware that there must be a good balance of positive and negative comments. This mismatch may stem from the fact that teachers had an error focused attitude to written feedback.

- **Teachers focus on students' written errors but they know that they will occur again.**

The feedback analysis showed that teachers' feedback was predominantly directed to the accuracy of the language. However, in the questionnaire survey, only 8 per cent of teachers responded that they believed students would make good use of this feedback in order to improve the accuracy of their use of the language.

Montgomery & Baker (2007) reported some discrepancies between teachers' beliefs regarding error feedback and their actual performance. They came up with the result that teachers underestimated the amount of feedback they gave on grammar and mechanics, and overestimated the amount of feedback on content, organization and vocabulary. Furthermore, teachers

believed they gave more feedback on organization on first drafts (and they believed that it was the right thing to do) than they actually did. By contrast, they gave a lot of feedback on local issues even in the first draft.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) also stated that there are incongruities between teachers' beliefs and practices in that although teachers believe that students benefit most from comments on organization, they fail to focus enough on organization and they provide more feedback on issues of grammar and vocabulary.

Table II.VI. *Incongruities between teachers' claims and actual performances*

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|--|--|
| Lee | 2009 | Mismatches between teachers' beliefs and feedback practice | There are some discrepancies between teachers' beliefs concerning feedback focus, feedback techniques and comprehensive-selective marking and their practice. |
| Montgomery and Baker | 2007 | | Teachers underestimate the amount of feedback they give on grammar and mechanics, and overestimate the amount of feedback on content, organization and vocabulary. |
| Cohen and Cavalcanti | 1990 | | Teachers believe that students benefit most from comments on organization but they do not focus enough on organization and they provide more feedback on grammar and vocabulary. |

To conclude, it can be suggested that some discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practice exist. These mismatches may result from the rules of the organizations they work for, the content of the tests students are supposed to take, students' preferences and teachers' past habits.

This comprehensive review has looked at studies concerning;

- The usefulness of feedback,
- The effects of the focus and type of feedback on students' subsequent success,
- The use of selective and comprehensive marking,
- Teachers' prioritising of various error types,
- Teachers' beliefs and preferences related with the feedback in L2 writing,
- Teachers' ideas about selective and comprehensive marking,
- Students' opinions on the worth of feedback,
- Mismatches between teachers' preferences, opinions regarding feedback and their practice in providing feedback.

The study to be carried out at Atılım University Preparatory School will focus on teachers' ranking of different error types in terms of their importance and their feedback preferences regarding the issues of comprehensive or selective marking and use of different feedback techniques. The teachers' reasons for these preferences will also be investigated. Lastly, whether there exist any discrepancies between their claims about their perceptions of the importance of various mistake types, feedback preferences and their performance while marking essay will be looked into. After data about these issues have been collected, the similarities and differences between these data and the ones mentioned in the review section will be illustrated.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to find out writing teachers' perceptions about the seriousness of different types of problems in the writings of upper-intermediate level students. In addition to this, this study aims to reveal what feedback techniques these writing teachers prefer to use. Lastly, if there are any mismatches between what teachers think about the gravity of mistakes as well as the ideal way of feedback giving and how they really go about while evaluating essays are investigated.

This chapter will provide information about the subjects, research design and instrumentation and data collection and analysis.

III. I. Subjects

This study was conducted at the Preparatory School of Atılım University. The participants of the study were writing teachers working at the institution. A total of 10 teachers took part in this study. 7 of the subjects were females and 3 were males. Their ages ranged between 28 and 54. Their experience varied from 6 years to 26 years. These teachers have all taught writing to students of different levels and they have marked student papers and given them feedback.

III. II. Instruments

III.II.I. Student essays

In order to find out how teachers act while they are evaluating essays and to see their ideas about the seriousness of problems present in these essays, ten essays written by upper-intermediate level students were chosen and duplicated for each teacher. The essays can be seen in Appendix A. These essays were

written by students in their writing course and were authentic materials, which reflected reality very well. The essays were written by different students in 3 subsequent weeks, so the papers were of different types and about different topics because different types would yield different type of sentences and errors, as mentioned before by two of the teachers taking part in the study. Naturally, since papers were gathered in three successive weeks, the amount of instruction between them differed but this was necessary to obtain compositions of different types. However, in order not to increase the amount of instruction given before each writing task, only three types of essays were chosen. These types are described below.

1- In the first four essays, students were given a statement and asked if they agreed or disagreed with it. They were asked to write a composition of between 180 and 200 words and support their opinions with specific examples.

e.g.: Children learn many things by observing the behaviour of adults and copying it. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

2- In three of the essays, students were again given a statement and asked to argue why this is the case or not. They were required to show their ideas of between 180-220 words.

e.g.: Giving exams to students periodically adds a lot to their success. Why/ why not?

3- In the last three essays, students were provided with a statement and were asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of it in between 180-220 words.

e.g.: Some people like travelling in a group with a tourist guide.

However, some others claim that it causes some problems. What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling with a companion?

The teachers who were given the essays were also given a sheet numbered from one to ten and were asked to list ten errors in the texts on these sheets in order of importance and indicate the lines where the errors were found. The list titled Judging Error Gravity can be found in Appendix B. In addition to this, they were asked to show the types of the mistakes they listed. Furthermore, these teachers were requested to make comments about the mistakes they found important in the texts. Therefore, their voices while they were telling their ideas about the texts and mistakes were recorded. This way, why they thought the mistakes they chose were important to them was discovered. However, some teachers thought that voice recording was not familiar to them and they had difficulty talking about their opinions about the mistakes. They added that they showed their ideas on the seriousness of mistakes on the sheet given to them to list these mistakes. Because of the reasons above, the teachers were not forced to have their voice recorded but only those who were willing to do it were asked to think aloud while marking the essays. Lastly, the teachers marking the papers were requested to suppose that they were the first drafts written by the students who would take their paper back after teacher's marking and give feedback to them in the way they preferred.

III.II.II. The questionnaire

The writing teachers taking part in this study were given a questionnaire which is comprised of three sections; General Information (about the participants), Error Seriousness and Error Feedback, respectively. The questionnaire can be seen in Appendix C.

The first part which is titled General Information was designed by the researcher in order to collect personal information about the participants like their names, gender, educational background and teaching experience.

In the second part titled Error Seriousness, there are nine sub-sections shown by letters from A to I. Sub-sections A to G were designed by the researcher making use of the master's thesis of Miyuku Hashimoto (2005), who set out to find out what types of mistakes students make in their writings. His aim was to show mistakes done by students of different levels and he found out and grouped the errors of upper-intermediate level students as a) *Verb Errors*, b) *Noun Ending Errors*, c) *Article Errors*, d) *Wrong Word Choices*, e) *Sentence Structural Errors*, f) *Spelling Errors* and g) *Punctuation Errors*. After putting these groupings in the questionnaire, sub-sections h) *Content Related Errors* and I) *Organizational Errors* were added by the researcher. Each sub-section is made up of different number of items and examples for each mistake type in sub-sections from A to G are given. In this part teachers were instructed to show their evaluation of the gravity of each mistake type. This second part of the questionnaire includes 36 items the choices of which are between 1 (Not important at all) and 5 (Very important).

The third part of the questionnaire was adapted from Lee (2003) who set out to investigate L2 writing teachers' perspectives, practices and problems regarding error feedback. As Lee (2003) investigated the perspectives of teachers regarding different levels of students, his questionnaire had different sections for each level. However, as this research focuses on only upper intermediate level students' writings and their errors, the sections for differing levels in the original questionnaire were omitted by the researcher. Another change was in the part related to selective-comprehensive marking. In this study the researcher added a part asking for the participants' reasons for their choices, which was not included in Lee's (2003) questionnaire. Lastly, another feedback technique was added to the last sub-section by the researcher and the scale which originally had 3 options in Lee (2003) was changed to 5 options.

The third part of the questionnaire aims to reveal L2 writing teachers' preferences regarding error feedback. In this section, teachers were asked to state if they prefer to mark the errors in student writings or not. In addition to that, they were requested to illustrate if they would prefer to mark the errors comprehensively or selectively, along with their reasons. The teachers who prefer to mark the errors selectively were instructed to point out how they would select the errors to be marked in the next sub-section. In the last sub-section of the third part of the questionnaire, the teachers were supposed to indicate the frequency with which they would use the listed error feedback techniques. The last technique was added by the researcher. The frequency scale provided is as follows:

1- Never 2-Rarely 3-Sometimes 4-Often 5- Always

The listed feedback techniques are the following:

- 1- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and correct them.
- 2- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them (with the help of a marking code).
- 3- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, but I don't correct them.
- 4- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code), but I don't correct them.
- 5- I hint at the location of errors.
- 6- I hint at the location of errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code).
- 7- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, and write comments about them.

In order to see the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire, it was given to 46 teachers that were not the real participants of the study. After their answers and comments were analysed, the following changes were made:

- Originally, in the second part of the questionnaire, the participants had four choices one of which they were to choose to show their ratings of the importance of different types of mistakes. These four choices were:

- 1- Not important at all 2- Slightly important 3- Important
- 4- Very important

However, some teachers pointed out that they would be able to express their thoughts more clearly if they had more options such as 5 and because of that, the scale used in this part was changed into the following format.

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|----------------|
| Not important at all | | | | Very important |
| 1 | | | | 5 |

- In the last sub-section of the third part of the questionnaire (Error Feedback), the teachers were requested to indicate how often they used the feedback techniques given and some of these techniques were illustrated by examples by Lee (2003). However, while completing this part, it was observed that some teachers had difficulty understanding some of the listed feedback techniques and differentiating it from one another. Therefore, to those that had not been shown by examples, examples were provided and already existing examples were made clearer as shown below:

Table III.I. *An example of changes in the questionnaire*

| Before piloting | After piloting |
|--|---|
| 1- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and correct them e.g.: He has <u>went</u> home. | 1- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and correct them e.g.: He has <u>went</u> home. <i>He has gone home.</i> |
| 2- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them with the help of a marking code e.g.: He has <u>went</u> home. Verb form | 2- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them with the help of a marking code e.g.: He has <u>went</u> home. Verb form / wf He has gone home. |

After piloting, reliability of each subsection was calculated and the results are as follows:

Table III.II. *Reliability scores for each section in the questionnaire*

| Part 2 | | | | | | | Part 3 | | | |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|------|
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | b | c |
| .820 | .678 | .854 | .658 | .767 | .737 | .921 | .782 | .775 | .768 | .643 |

For the validity of the questionnaire, experts in the area were consulted and their opinions were used while designing and changing some parts of the questionnaire. Among their opinions were writing clearer examples for the Incomplete Sentence and Wrong Article types as well as for the last part showing feedback techniques, excluding a type (lack of verb) in Verb Error category since this mistake type is covered by another type titled Incomplete Sentence under the category of Sentence Structural Errors.

III.II.III. The Interview

A semi-structured interview was designed in order to reveal more about teachers' reasons for the gravity they attached to different mistake types, their beliefs about the use, advantages and disadvantages of different feedback techniques, why they prefer the feedback providing ways they say they use at present and what they take into account while marking essays and giving feedback. The following questions were prepared before the interview and according to the participants' answers, more questions were asked if necessary.

1. What component in an essay of upper-intermediate level student do you attach the most importance? Why?
2. Are all mistakes of the same category (mainly use of English) equally important to you? Why/ Why not?
3. Are you in favour of comprehensive or selective marking? Why?

4. If you are in favour of selective marking, how do you decide on the errors to be marked and to be ignored?
5. What feedback technique(s) do you prefer to use? Why?
6. Does your feedback change from student to student and from time to time (how far in the course)?
7. Do you think students make use of feedback given to them both in the long and short run? If yes, how and in what areas?

III.III. Data collection

Each teacher taking part in the survey was given ten students essays and a list where they should list the problems they found in the essay in order of importance. The lists were numbered from one to ten but the teachers were told that they could write as many problems as they found and wanted to list. Therefore, some teachers listed fewer than ten mistakes whereas some listed more than ten. In addition to this, the teachers were requested to mark the essays aloud and record themselves while talking about the problems they found important in them or strengths of these essays. (An example can be found in Appendix D). However, not all teachers were willing to do that since they thought that they would not be able to act as they normally do if they recorded themselves. Because of this reason, only volunteer teachers did the recording. Half of the teachers (5) did the recording while the other half did not. Then, those who were not willing to record themselves were requested to show their reasons for choosing a problem important by writing their reasons clearly. This way, their opinions about the gravity of each error were obtained. One month after the marking task, the teachers were given the questionnaire

and after the results of the questionnaires were obtained, 5 of the teachers were interviewed about their perceptions of error gravity and feedback preferences. The reason why the essay marking task was implemented before the questionnaire is that it would be harder for the teachers to remember their choices about the seriousness of different mistakes that they listed in the judging error gravity sheet. Therefore, they would not be affected from their previous choices while filling in the questionnaire. However, giving the questionnaire first was more likely to have an influence on their prioritising of the mistakes in the essays. While choosing teachers to interview to, those who had different opinions from the majority according to the results of the questionnaire and those who did not do recording were given priority.

III.IV. Data analysis

Analysis of the marking task: Each teacher's lists for each essay were analysed and the mistakes they marked were written on a separate sheet according to the category they belong to. The number of each error type was counted for each teacher and then, the number of each error type was attained for all teachers. This way it could be seen what mistakes had attracted the attention of both each teacher and of all teachers. Since seeing only the number of mistakes marked was not enough, their place in each list was examined. Thus, it could be seen what problems were more important than others for each teacher.

Analysis of the questionnaire: The teachers' answers for each section were entered into SPSS 15.0 and mean scores for each error type were attained using

Descriptive Statistics. This way, it was made clear which mistake type(s) had been more important than others for all teachers.

Analysis of the interviews: The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Each teacher's answers to each question were obtained in written format.

In this chapter, the purpose of the study, information about the participants in the study, research design and data collection and analysis were presented. The next chapter presents the findings for each research question.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study with respect to each research question. First, the results of the essay marking task, and then the results of the questionnaire and finally the relevant findings of the interviews are reported.

IV.I. Teachers' priorities in expository writing

The first research question quoted below seeks to find out how writing teachers prioritise student errors or problems in expository writing:

How do writing teachers prioritise student mistakes (in the areas of use of English, vocabulary, content and organization) in expository writing?

In order to answer this research question, the teachers' markings were examined. In addition to that, their choices in the second part of the questionnaire and their answers in the interview were examined.

IV.I.I. Results of the essay marking task

In order to see how the writing teachers prioritise problems found in the essays, the lists in which they ordered problems in order of importance were analysed. The frequencies of the problems marked by all teachers were found out and these problems were classified according to the error type. When the results were analysed, it was seen that the teachers had marked a total of 786 errors. The categories for these errors and the frequency for each category are given below.

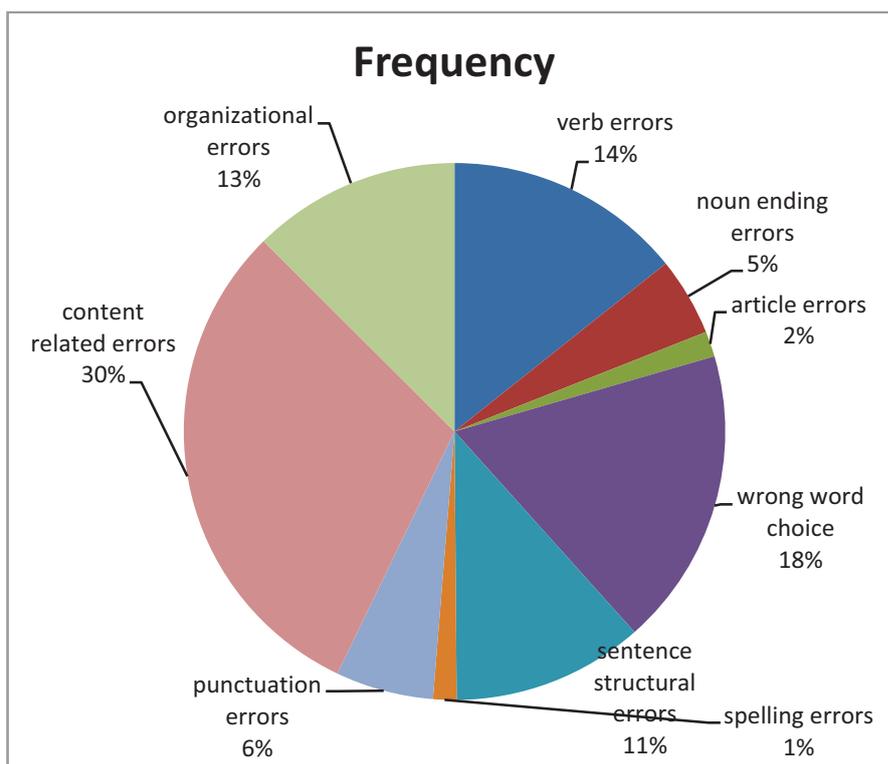


Figure IV.I. *Distribution of error types*

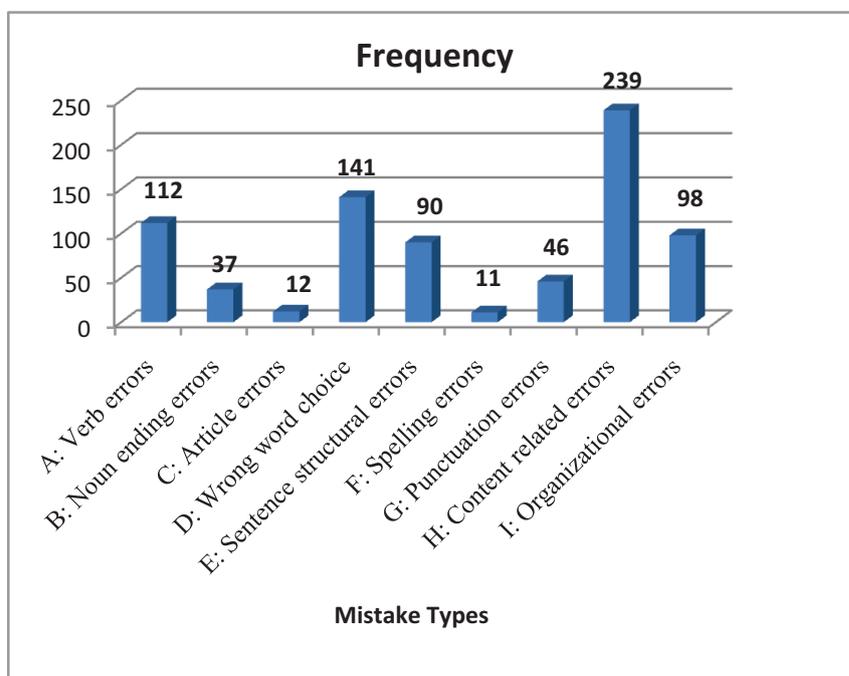


Figure IV.II. *Frequency of error types*

As can be clearly seen in the figures, the highest number of errors marked was in *content related errors* category which is followed by *wrong word choice*, *verb errors*, *sentence structural errors*, and *organizational errors*. A more detailed distribution of errors marked for each category can be seen in Appendix D.

However, when categories of *Verb errors*, *Noun ending errors*, *Article errors*, *Wrong word choice*, *Sentence structural errors*, *Spelling errors* and *Punctuation errors* are considered as one category under accuracy², the big category with the highest frequency is accuracy as shown below.

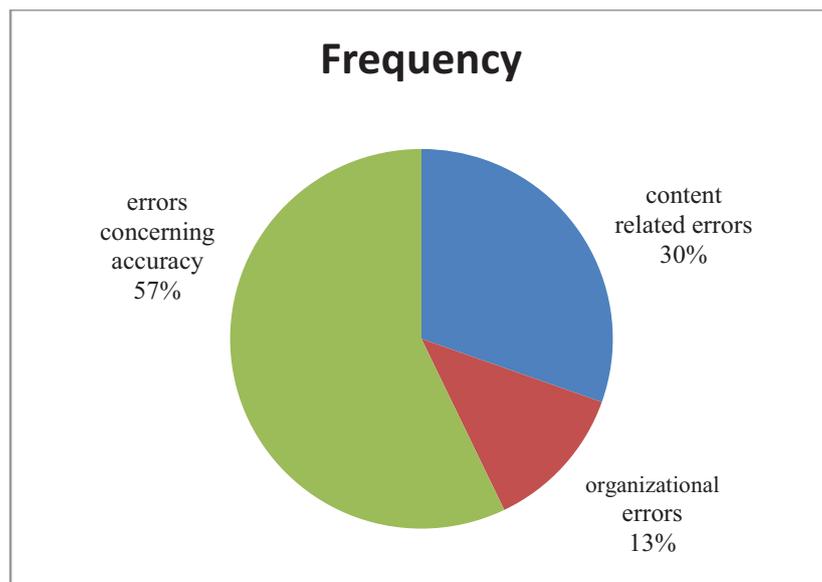


Figure IV.III. *Frequency of error types*

It is apparent in the figure above that errors concerning the accuracy in the essays constitute 57 % of all the errors marked by the teachers. However,

² 'Accuracy' is used to refer to linguistic accuracy in this study.

43 % of all marked mistakes are either content related (30 %) or organizational errors (13%).

Seeing only the distribution is not enough to understand the teachers' priorities. Therefore, their ordering of these errors must be closely examined. When their ordering was looked into, it was seen that only two of the ten teachers had ordered verb, sentence structural and word errors before content related and organizational errors. This shows that most of the teachers had thought that organizational and content related errors were more important than verb, sentence structural and vocabulary errors. This may be because as one of the teachers puts forward "The aim of writing classes is to teach students to produce ideas and to express them clearly by giving good examples". It was found out in the recordings of the essay marking task that the teachers attached a lot of importance to the presence and quality of thesis statement and effectiveness of an introductory paragraph. They considered an essay unsuccessful when the introduction did not prepare readers for the topic. The following statements by one of the teachers show how important she views the quality of the introductory paragraph.

When I start reading a student's paper, the first thing I look at is how s/he introduces the topic. We ask students to start with some general information about the topic and if the information provided by the student is too general, it makes me irritated. Besides, how s/he links these general statements to the topic at hand is of great importance since sometimes I feel that the student has written a few general statements not in order to direct the reader to the topic but just to write something.(T-1)³

³ Quotations were translated into English by the researcher.
T-1 means *teacher 1*.

These teachers also felt irritated when the arguments were not supported well and when the ideas students tried to present were not clear. These teachers mentioned that the problem of unclear statements emerged because the students could not write grammatically correct sentences, especially incomplete sentences and used wrong verb forms like wrong voice. They thought that using the wrong voice and writing incomplete sentences affected meaning negatively. What is more, the teachers marked the use of wrong word at the top of the list claiming that wrong word use impairs meaning to be conveyed. Last but not least, these teachers expressed a strong annoyance at facing irrelevant statements which harm the unity of writing. These teachers listed structural and vocabulary errors only after they listed the problems about the content and organization of the essays. Recordings of the essay marking task also show that when the content and organization of the essays are good, grammar and vocabulary mistakes, especially those which do not hinder meaning were not of much importance. However, errors concerning use of English and vocabulary affecting meaning were important because they harmed the content of the essays.

It was seen in the recordings of the essay marking task that one of the two teachers who ordered grammar and vocabulary related errors before the other types admits considering a good use of English more important than content and organization. This was because he thought it is impossible to present good content without using correct language. He presented his ideas as follows:

For me, the most important thing in a student paper is a good use of the language since when sentences are grammatically wrong, and especially if there are several mistakes in a sentence, it is not easy to understand what the student is trying to say. Therefore, I consider accuracy very very important. Only when the sentences are accurate, can one understand the ideas presented by students.(T-6)

To sum up, most of the teachers taking part in the study were frustrated with the problems concerning the content and organization of essays and errors of grammar and word use that spoil meaning.

IV.I.II. Results of the questionnaire

From the teachers' answers to the second section of the questionnaire entitled 'Error Seriousness', the results shown below were obtained. In this section, the teachers were instructed to illustrate how important they viewed each error type by circling the options which reflect their ratings.

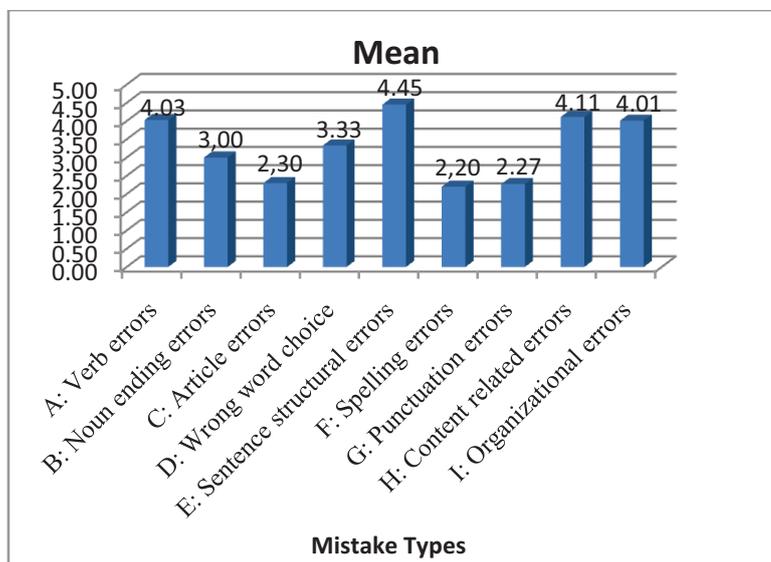


Figure IV.IV. Averages of the importance of the error types
Averages are out of 5.00

As can be seen from the figure above, *Sentence structural errors* (E) were given the most importance by the teachers with an average of 4.45.

Especially Incomplete sentence and Wrong word order mistakes in the *Sentences structural errors* category were viewed really important most probably as mentioned in the interviews since these affected the content of the essays negatively. This was followed by *Content related errors* (4.11) and *Verb errors* (4.03). *Organizational errors* came only fourth with an average of 4.01.

When the teachers' choices in the second section of the questionnaire were analysed on error type base, it was apparent that the teachers had attached most importance to incomplete sentences (an error type in the category of *Sentence structural errors*) and lack of thesis statement (an error type belonging to the category of *organizational errors*). Their averages were both 4.80. These two types were followed by lack of unity with an average of 4.60. Lack of transition words and ineffective conclusion were in the third order with an average of 4.40. In the fourth order were ineffective introduction and wrong verb tense of which averages were 4.30. Lastly, wrong verb form, lack of transition words, wrong use of transition words and lack of connectives were considered quite serious with a mean of 4.20.

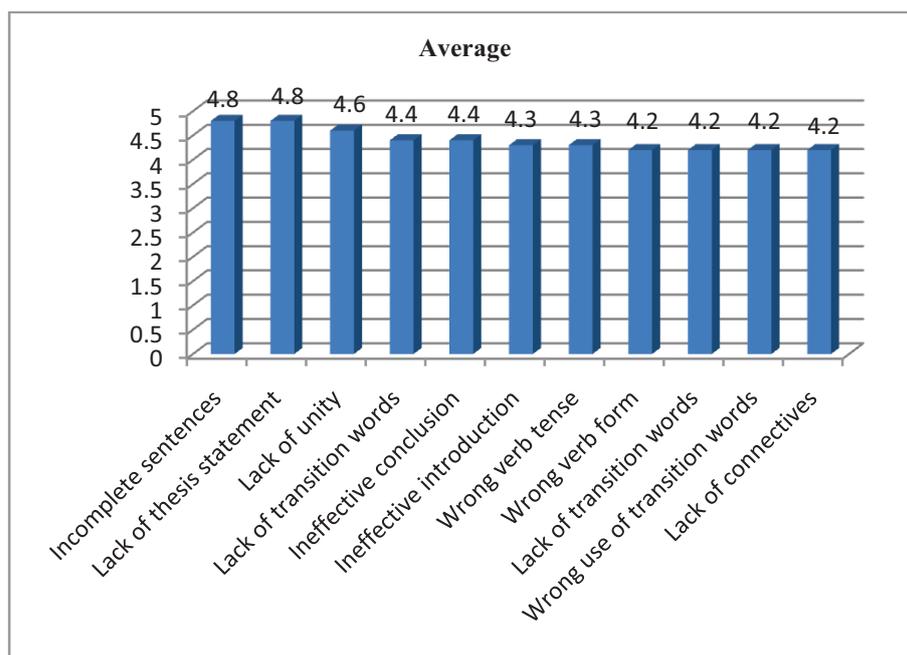


Figure IV.V. Error types with the highest averages.
Averages are out of 5.00.

Averages for each error type can be seen below.

Table IV.I. Averages for each error type

| Error type | Average |
|---|-------------|
| A: Verb Errors | 4,03 |
| A 1: Wrong verb tense | 4,30 |
| A2: Wrong verb form | 4,20 |
| A3: Subject/ verb disagreement | 3,60 |
| B: Noun Ending Errors | 3,00 |
| B1: Singular/plural nouns | 2,90 |
| B2: Wrong possessive ending | 3,10 |
| C: Article Errors | 2,30 |
| C1: Missing article | 2,20 |
| C2: Unnecessary article | 2,50 |
| C3: Wrong article use | 2,20 |
| D: Wrong Word Choices | 3,33 |
| D1: Wrong preposition choice | 2,90 |
| D2: Wrong vocabulary choice | 3,70 |
| D3: Wrong word form | 3,40 |
| E: Sentence Structural Errors | 4,45 |
| E1: Wrong word order | 4,10 |
| E2: Incomplete sentence | 4,80 |
| E3: Unnecessary word/phrase | 3,10 |
| F: Spelling Errors | 2,20 |
| F1: Spelling error(s) resulting in another English word | 2,70 |

| | |
|---|-------------|
| F2: Spelling error(s) not resulting in another English word | 1,70 |
| G: Punctuation Errors | 2,27 |
| G1: Incorrect punctuation | 2,20 |
| G2: Omission of punctuation | 2,30 |
| G3: Unnecessary punctuation | 2,20 |
| G4: Capitalization error | 2,50 |
| H: Content Related Errors | 4,11 |
| H1: No thesis statement | 4,80 |
| H2: Poor thesis statement | 3,80 |
| H3: Poor argument | 3,90 |
| H4: Arguments not well supported | 4,20 |
| H5: Irrelevant statements | 4,20 |
| H6: Lack of clarity of ideas | 4,20 |
| H7: Repetition of ideas | 3,90 |
| H8: Failure to balance parts | 3,90 |
| I: Organizational Errors | 4,01 |
| I1: No title | 2,80 |
| I2: Ineffective introduction | 4,30 |
| I3: Lack of unity | 4,60 |
| I4: Lack of transition words | 4,40 |
| I5: Wrong use of transition words | 3,90 |
| I6: Lack of connectives | 3,90 |
| I7: Wrong use of connectives | 3,80 |
| I8: Ineffective conclusion | 4,40 |

IV.I.III. Results of the interview

The teachers taking part in the interview were asked the questions below.

What is the most important criterion of an upper-intermediate level student's essay?

Are all mistakes of the same category equally important to you?

E.g: Are all verb form errors equally important?

All the teachers who were interviewed said that the content and organization of an essay at upper-intermediate level were regarded very important by them. They believed that the main role of writing at this level should be to convey one's ideas about a subject in an understandable and organised way. The next criterion they viewed important was grammar since

without grammar, expressing good content is not possible. However, not all grammar mistakes were equally important for these teachers. They mentioned that mistakes that influence the meaning were more important than those that do not. At this point, one of the teachers who were interviewed said:

To me, content and organization is really very important. That is I regard fluency more crucial than accuracy. After considering the quality of content and organization, I think about the grammar of the student. However, those grammar mistakes that hinder meaning are more important for me. For instance, if there are verb tense mistakes in a paper, those that influence the meaning are of greater significance than those that do not.(T-2)

Lastly, two of the teachers stated that when the grammar of the student is not good enough, they start to view it as the most important component since with such a bad use of English it is hard to produce good content. That is, what they consider most crucial in an essay varies from paper to paper as put forward below by one of these teachers:

I consider content and organization more important than grammar, but sometimes the grammar used in the essay is so bad that I find myself focusing mainly on the grammar of the student.(T-3)

To sum up, 80 % of the teachers view content related and organizational errors more important than errors related with accuracy and mechanics. This is because they believe that the aim of writing classes is to teach students to express their ideas in an organized way. These teachers also care about accuracy. They believe that use of English really matters, and those mistakes that hinder meaning is important. Still, their prioritising of mistakes may change depending on the proficiency level of the students. That is, when the sentences written by the students contain too many mistakes, they start to view

accuracy more important than anything else. However, 20 % of the teachers regard accuracy more important than content and organization since they believe the students cannot express themselves if they cannot write correct sentences.

IV.II. Teachers' preferences concerning selective and comprehensive marking

The second research question, quoted below, in the study concerns the teachers' preferences about selective or comprehensive marking along with their reasons.

Do teachers prefer selective or comprehensive marking?

Both the results in the essay marking task, the A and B sections of the third part of the questionnaire (Section A asks if the teachers prefer marking errors selectively or comprehensively and section B asks the teachers how they select errors to mark, namely, if they prefer selective marking) and answers to the question, quoted below, in the interview were used to answer this research question:

Are you in favour of using comprehensive or selective marking?

Why?

Both the markings done by the teachers and the questionnaire results showed that six of the teachers, that is, 60 % of the participants, prefer comprehensive marking. They presented some reasons for their choice and these reasons are as follows:

- At upper-intermediate level, it would be better to correct all mistakes as the students have already been exposed to most of the grammar rules and vocabulary items. Therefore, marking all their mistakes would not put them off writing.(T-10)
- If teachers do not mark all the mistakes, the students may not be aware of their mistakes and may think that the unmarked parts are all correct.(T-1, T-6, T-8)
- Marking all the errors is beneficial for students for their revised drafts. In order to have them write a better revised draft, all mistakes should be pointed out.(T-7)
- Now that both the students and the teachers spend a lot of effort to produce a good work, it is teachers' duty to mark all the mistakes because directing students' attention to all the mistakes is necessary so that they can correct them.(T-2)
- Marking all the errors is important because writing teachers are supposed to improve both the writing skills and grammar of the learners and marking and evaluating all the mistakes are beneficial for this aim.(T-2)

The last comment shows that some writing teachers perceive themselves as a writing teacher as well as a grammar teacher because they believe they should help to improve the grammar of students.

Four teachers (40 %) preferred to mark students' mistakes selectively because they think that:

- it is not vital to mark some mistakes of punctuation and spelling because students make these mistakes not because they do not know the correct forms but due to sheer carelessness.(T-4)
- it is time saving.(T-4)
- marking all the mistakes is discouraging and may put students off writing.(T-1, T-3)
- different mistakes should be marked in accordance with the objectives of the writing task.(T-9)

As for the criteria for choosing mistakes for marking, teachers presented some principles such as:

- selected mistakes should be related to students' specific needs.(T-3, T-4, T-5, T-9)

- only mistakes hindering meaning should be marked.(T-3, T-4)
- mistakes that are directly linked to grammar instruction should be dealt with.(T-3, T-5)
- mistakes to be marked can be selected while marking essays.(T-4, T-5)

To conclude, while 60 % of the writing teachers prefer comprehensive marking, the rest of them are in favour of selective marking for some reasons. The most commonly presented reason for marking mistakes comprehensively is that the students can only be aware of all their mistakes if illustrated by the teachers. Otherwise, they might think that all unmarked parts are correct and go on making the same mistakes. On the other hand, it is believed by half of the teachers preferring selective marking that marking all the mistakes is discouraging for students, so they might have a negative attitude towards writing. All the teachers who would rather implement selective marking state that teachers should choose the mistakes to mark in accordance with the students specific needs. They believe that the teachers should observe the students and find out the mistakes they make most frequently and mark them. It must be kept in mind that the teachers dealt with upper intermediate level writing in this study, so they might think that the students at this level should be able to use the language quite efficiently, so pointing out all the mistakes they make may work well with them so that they become aware of their mistakes, and correct them.

IV.III. Teachers' preferences regarding feedback techniques

The other research questions in the study, quoted below, are about feedback technique preferences of the teachers along with their reasons.

Which error feedback techniques do writing teachers prefer?

Why do they prefer those error feedback techniques?

In order to answer this question, how teachers gave feedback while marking the essays, their answers to the last section of the third part of the questionnaire (where they showed the frequency of the listed error feedback techniques) and the data from the following items in the interview were used:

What feedback techniques do you prefer to use at the upper-intermediate level?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the selected feedback technique(s)?

Does your feedback change from time to time (how far in the course) and from student to student?

Do you think the feedback provided is useful to the students both in the short and long term?, If so, in which areas is it most useful?

The feedback techniques listed in the relevant part of the questionnaire are as follows:

- a-** Indicating (underline/circle) errors and correcting them.
- b-** Indicating (underline/circle) errors, correcting them and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code).
- c-** Indicating (underline/circle) errors, but not correcting them.

- d- Indicating (underline/circle) errors and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code), but not correcting them.
- e- Hinting at the location of errors.
- f- Hinting at the location of errors and categorizing them (with the help of a marking code).
- g- Writing brief comments on the quality of content and organization.

IV.III.I. Results of the marking task

When the teachers' practices while marking the essays were examined, it was discovered that 9 of the 10 teachers preferred to illustrate mistakes usually by underlining them and writing codes for them. However, only one teacher would rather just illustrate errors without writing codes for them, that is, technique **d** on the list above. In addition, most of the teachers wrote comments in the margins which sometimes remind some grammatical rules or most of the time point out weaknesses in the content and organization. There were only a few comments pointing out the strengths of the students in the teachers' feedback. They wrote some short comments like 'Good!' and 'Good introduction!' on students' papers.

IV.III.II. Results of the questionnaire

There were seven types of feedback and the teachers were requested to show how often they used these feedback techniques in the last part of the questionnaire. The figure below shows the results.

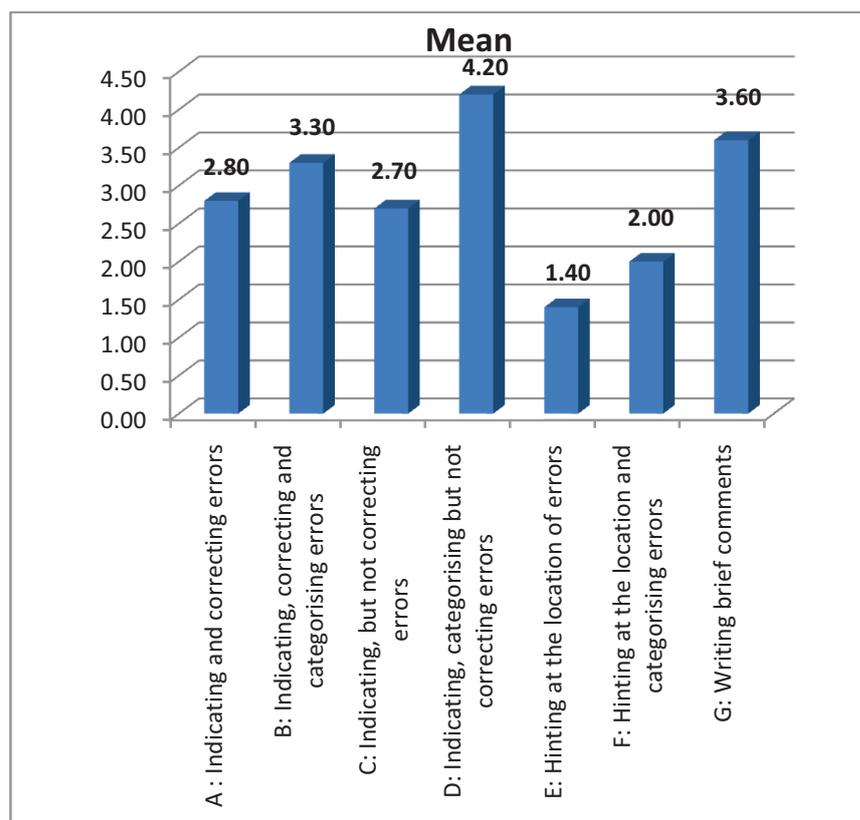


Figure IV.VI. *Averages of the use of different feedback techniques*
Averages are out of 5.00

The feedback technique most frequently used by the teachers is indicating errors by underlining or circling them and categorizing them with the help of a marking code without making corrections. The next most frequently used feedback type is indicating mistakes and writing comments about them either by reminding a rule or asking questions about the mistakes. Indicating mistakes, correcting them and categorizing them using a marking code is the feedback technique which follows those methods. The fourth most frequently used feedback technique is indicating mistakes and just correcting them.

IV.III.III. Why do the teachers prefer those error feedback techniques?

The interview results showed that the teachers preferred to use error codes while marking essays since they think that codes help students revise their work better because as the students know what codes mean, they can find the correct version more easily. These teachers believe codes are really useful as put forward by one of the teachers below:

Using codes is really very very useful for students' second drafts since codes direct students to the correct form in the second draft in which students learn a lot because they see their mistakes.(T-2)

Some teachers admitted that they may sometimes correct the mistakes, though. They make corrections when the sentence written by the student contains a lot of mistakes and students are thought not to be able to correct them themselves despite the codes. Some serious mistakes are usually corrected by one of the teachers when these mistakes are made especially by the students who are unlikely to write a second draft so that they can see and make use of the correct versions while getting ready for exams. Another teacher corrects mistakes concerning wrong word uses thinking that the students cannot find rules for word use in books and they cannot find the word to be used in that context in a dictionary. The teachers' ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of using codes and not using codes are given below.

a) Advantages of using error codes

- Using codes guides students well while self-correcting mistakes. Students can understand the nature of their mistakes and correct them more easily.(T-1, T-2, T-4)

- Using codes is more advantageous than not writing codes since students feel more motivated when they see codes than when they do not.(T-1, T-4)

b) Disadvantages of using error codes

- Students may not learn or remember what codes mean. Although students are given a list showing the meanings of error codes, sometimes they do not understand codes and they do not bother looking at the list. This is the case especially when uncommon mistakes are coded since the students have not seen these rarely used codes so frequently.(T-1, T-2, T-4, T-5)
- Especially with some error types like articles, using codes may almost mean giving the correct form since there are not many options students should choose from. Therefore, it would not be necessary to think about the correct form.(T-3)
- Especially students with low proficiency feel discouraged when they see lots of correction codes.(T-1, T-2)

c) Advantage of illustrating mistakes without error codes

- This technique encourages students to think about their mistakes more than when codes are used.(T-3)

The teacher believes this is because students do not have to think a lot when the codes are used since they know the type of the mistake and the number of options from which they need to choose the correct form is limited, especially for some error types such as articles. When the writing teacher writes the code for an article mistake, the student will almost automatically find the correct answer since there are only three different articles.

d) Disadvantage of illustrating mistakes without error codes

- It is really hard to understand and correct mistakes through this technique for students whose proficiency level is low(T-3)

It has been put forward by this teacher that when the student's proficiency level is low, even if s/he knows that there is a mistake

there, s/he may not be able to understand why the marked part is wrong. However, when s/he sees the codes, s/he might see the kind of the mistake, for instance if it is a vocabulary or verb form mistake, and so might correct it more easily compared to when the codes are not present.

These teachers believe that students make most use of their feedback in grammar when short term gains are thought because it is easy to correct these mistakes when they are categorised with codes. One of the teachers claimed that feedback in mechanics, namely spelling and punctuation, works really well. Students, especially those with low motivation and low proficiency level, do not take feedback concerning organization and content into account. This is because improving content and organization is more difficult and requires more time. The teacher who made the above comment and two other teachers complain that students attend to and correct errors concerning grammar and vocabulary in their revised drafts whereas they do not develop the content and organization in the second draft. The issue of attending to the problems of grammar and vocabulary or content and organization is a criterion for distinguishing good and poor language learners for many teachers (Porte, 1997). When students' long term gains are taken into account, three of the five teachers thought that content and organization related feedback is more beneficial than feedback in other areas. They have come up with this conclusion through their observation that even a low achiever learns some key issues regarding the organization and content of essays over a period of 8 months spent in the preparatory school. These same students still make very

serious mistakes related with the use of English even at the end of a year at the preparatory school, though. This is explained by one of the teachers as follows:

I feel feedback given to the students is useful especially in the areas of content and organization. The students keep making the same grammar mistakes after three-four weeks but after about the same period of time they come and say things such as: I have written something but I know my example is not good, I could not express it well, I feel I am repeating things.. This shows that they are aware of the problems concerning the content and organization of their essays. Therefore, as I see it, they make more use of feedback concerning content and organization.(T-1)

What is more, one teacher added that professors at faculties state that students who have studied at the preparatory school come to their departments with a notion of what good writing is like and with an awareness of content related and organizational issues. Another point made by two of the teachers was that the shape and focus of their feedback change in the course of time since they get to know students and their needs better. This is exemplified by one of the teachers below:

I have a student who worked in Antalya before he started the Preparatory School. He had a good use of English but it was informal English. At the beginning of the term, all my feedback focused on getting this student to use formal language. With the help of my feedback and instruction in the grammar classes, he was able to start using the language in a formal way and then my feedback began to deal with other issues concerning writing, such as using advanced vocabulary.(T-2)

Expecting more from the students is another reason for this change. As students learn more, teachers expect a better use of language, a larger vocabulary size and better expressed ideas. Therefore, their comments on the paper become harsher.

IV.IV. Compatibility of the teachers' claims with their performance

The last research question, quoted below, seeks to find out if teachers' claimed perceptions of error seriousness and preferences about error marking procedures are compatible with what they really do while evaluating essays.

Are teachers' claimed perceptions of error seriousness and preferences about error marking procedures compatible with what they really do while evaluating essays? If so, to what extent?

In order to address this issue, the teachers' performance while marking and evaluating the given essays was compared with the results of the questionnaire and answers in the interviews.

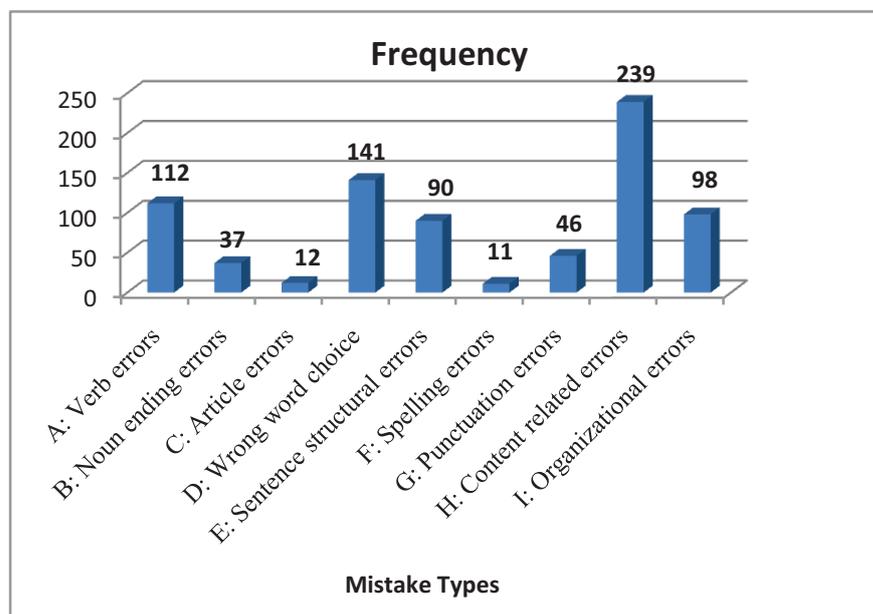


Figure IV.VII. Frequency of error types

The figure above shows the frequency of mistake types marked by the teachers while evaluating the essays. As can be seen from the figure, quite a big number of the mistakes belong to *content related errors* category and it is

followed by *wrong word choice*, *verb errors* and *sentence structural errors*. *Spelling errors* are regarded as the least important of all the mistake types. However, when the categories concerning accuracy are considered as one category, the result shown in the following figure is obtained.

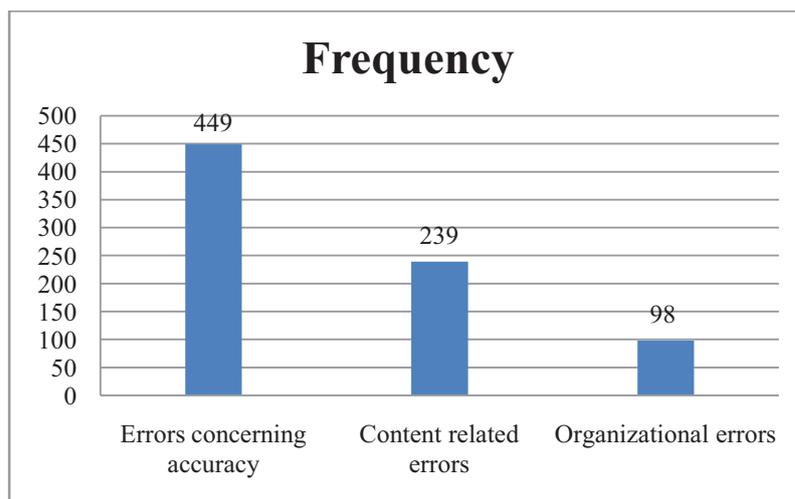


Figure IV. VIII. *Distribution of errors to different categories*

Linguistic accuracy categories add up to 449, which is the 57 % of the total number of mistakes marked by the teachers. However, it is quite significant that content related mistakes category by itself reach 30 % of the whole mistakes, showing that the teachers are also very concerned with content and organization since they listed those before the errors of accuracy.

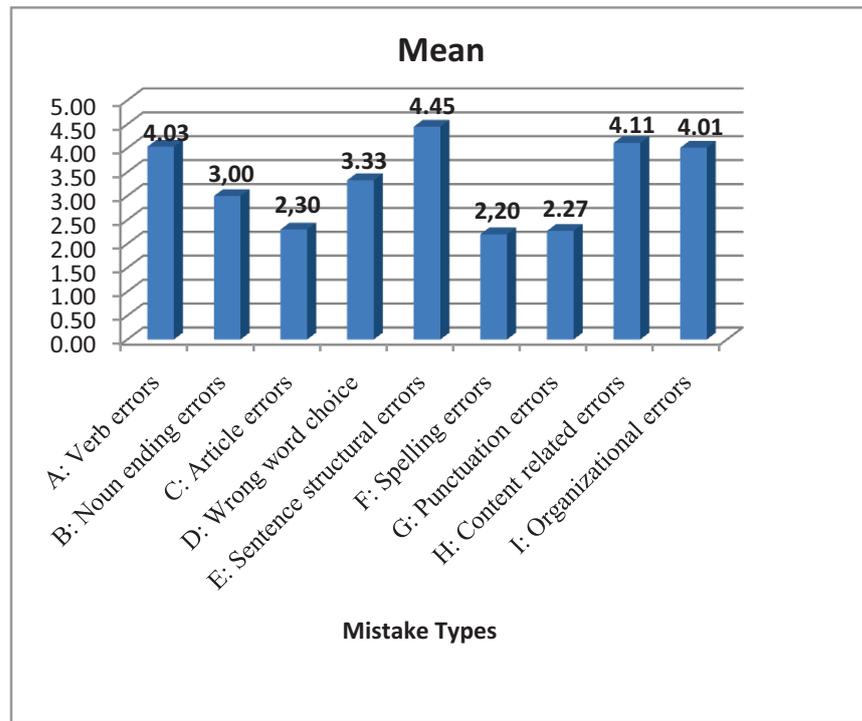


Figure IV.IX. Averages of the importance of the error types
Averages are out of 5.00

The figure above shows the means of each mistake category according to the teachers' choices in the questionnaire where they show their judgments of the gravity of mistake types. As can be seen in this figure, teachers believe that *content related* and *organizational errors* are quite important. It is also clear that error types covered under accuracy are given different levels of importance. The teachers considered *sentence structural mistakes* as the most important category and it was followed by *verb errors* and *wrong word choice*. When these error types with high averages are looked into, it is concluded that they have a big influence on the meaning to be conveyed. This shows that the teachers are concerned with the accuracy of the essays as well as the content and organization.

As for the feedback preferences, when the questionnaire results were examined, the following results were obtained. Indicating, categorizing but not correcting errors is the feedback technique that is most preferred by the teachers and the next feedback technique which they prefer to use is writing brief comments. These are followed by correcting errors either by categorizing or without using codes.

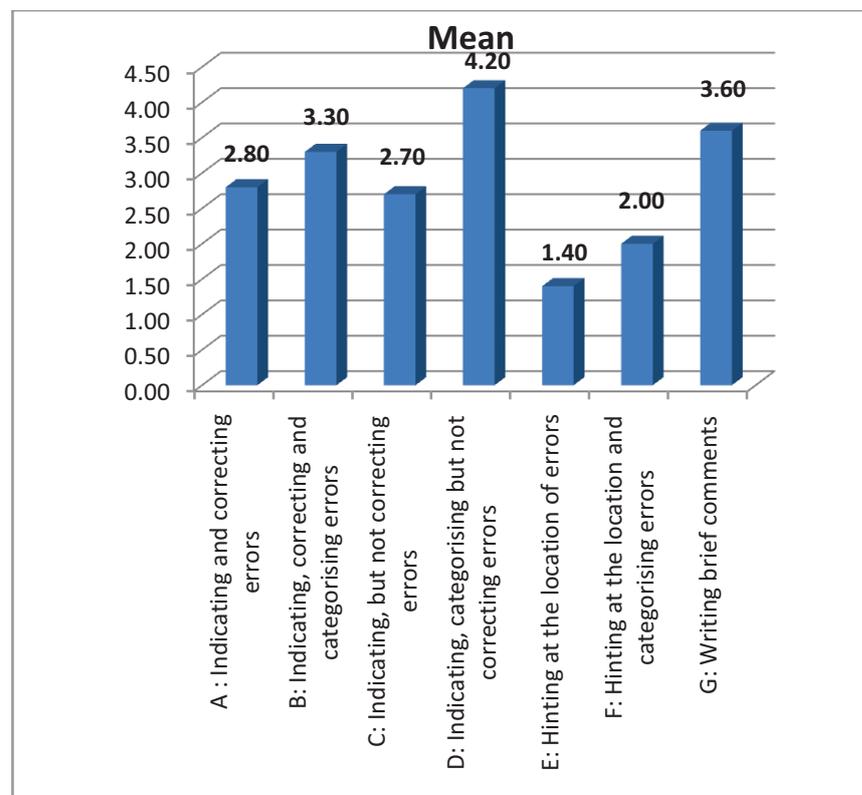


Figure IV.X. *Averages of the use of different feedback techniques*
Averages are out of 5.00

When teachers' preferences while marking the essays were looked into, it was discovered that 90 % of the teachers preferred to underline and categorize mistakes by using error codes mostly as they mentioned in the interview that codes direct the students to see their mistakes and correct them better. However, only one of the teachers (10 %) just underlined the mistakes without

categorizing them. Besides, 80 % of the teachers wrote comments in the margins either by reminding rules or asking questions and making comments on the content of the essays.

When the teachers' answers in the questionnaires, the results of the essay marking task and interview results were examined, it was concluded that what the teachers assert about their perceptions of error gravity and preferences about feedback is definitely consistent with their actual performance while marking essays. All the results obtained show that the majority of the teachers are irritated with errors concerning content, organization, sentence structure, verb and vocabulary use. This is because of the fact that they all believe that at upper-intermediate level, it is essential that a student should present ideas in a comprehensible and organized way. Since wrong sentence structures, especially incomplete sentences, wrong tense and verb form use and wrong vocabulary use have an effect on meaning, they are considered serious by the teachers. Moreover, this may stem from the teaching system at the institution. As writing is a separate unit, that is some teachers teach only writing whereas some others teach grammar, reading, listening and vocabulary, writing teachers feel that their duty is not teaching grammar but to teach how to develop, organize and express ideas. Although one of the teachers who were interviewed said that helping to improve students' grammar is one of their aims, she also stated that still her first aim is teaching the students to express ideas in an organized way. Two of the teachers who had marked mistakes of language use in essays as very important had also illustrated in the questionnaire that these were as significant as or more significant than content and organizational

problems. They believed that it is not possible to express good content without using the language accurately. Therefore, they held the idea that the writing teachers should focus on accuracy as well as fluency, which develops later.

The teachers' feedback preferences in the questionnaire are also compatible with their performance of marking essays. Most of the teachers preferred to illustrate and categorize the mistakes, which is the feedback technique having the highest mean in the questionnaire. This may be because they are used to using this technique as using error codes is a rule at the institution. They also made some comments in the margin, which is what they claimed they prefer to do. They mentioned that their comments reminded some rules or focused on the content as well as exemplifying some grammatical and lexical rules. Furthermore, as it was illustrated in the questionnaire, these teachers sometimes preferred to correct the mistakes. In the interview, they justified this choice saying that some students do not understand codes, or do not care about correcting their own mistakes. In addition, as mentioned by one of the teachers, vocabulary mistakes were corrected by the teachers since there are no sources students can consult in order to correct these mistakes.

To wrap up, believing that an upper-intermediate student's main purpose while writing an essay is to communicate ideas in an organized and clear way, content related and organizational problems were given quite a lot of importance by the majority (80%) of the teachers in the survey. In addition to these, incomplete sentences, verb use errors and wrong vocabulary use irritated these teachers a lot as all these affected the meaning to be conveyed in the essay. However, 20 % of the teachers pointed out that they cared most for the

accuracy since without being able to use the language correctly, presenting good content is almost impossible. Furthermore, some teachers mentioned that their priorities regarding the seriousness of different mistake types change depending on the students' level. When the students' level is not good and their work contains too many mistakes concerning accuracy, they start to care most for accuracy, leaving content and organization to the second place.

As for the feedback preferences of the teachers, it was observed that six of the teachers preferred to use comprehensive marking while four of them were in favor of selective marking for some reasons. They believed comprehensive marking was needed in order to get students to be aware of their mistakes so that they can correct all of them. However, some of the teachers believed comprehensive marking was demotivating for students, so mistakes should be marked in accordance with the needs of the students. Among these teachers' feedback technique preferences were illustrating mistakes and writing codes for them without making corrections, writing comments and questions about the problems in the essay, underlining mistakes without correction and error codes and sometimes correcting these mistakes. They came up with several ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of different feedback techniques. They believed using codes is useful in that codes guide students well while they are correcting their own mistakes since they become aware of the type of the mistakes thanks to the codes. However, they do not work when the students do not understand what the codes mean as some students forget the meaning of the codes and do not bother looking at the list given them. Also, it was observed only two teachers' comments were

numerous and detailed while the rest of the teachers wrote few and short comments. Lastly, it was found out that all the teachers' claims about the perceptions of error seriousness and feedback providing preferences were compatible with their actual performance while marking essays.

Having reported the results, the similarities and differences between these findings and the ones in the reviewed studies and possible reasons for them will be given in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter findings concerning each research question are summarized and similarities and differences between these findings and the results of the studies presented in the Literature Review chapter are pointed out. What is more, possible causes of the findings of the study are discussed. Lastly, some implications and limitations of the study are stated and some suggestions for further research are made.

V.I. Teachers' priorities in expository writing

Results of the essay marking task, the questionnaire and the interviews showed that most of the writing teachers (80 %) viewed the content and organizations of essays at upper-intermediate level as significantly important components. The mistakes concerning the content and organizations of the essays made up 43 % of all the mistakes that the teachers marked. This is because they believed that expressing one's ideas clearly is the purpose of writing and writing classes should aim teaching students how to express their thoughts in an organized way. For these teachers, presence and quality of a thesis statement, lack of unity (usually caused by irrelevant statements), quality of the introductory and concluding paragraphs and lack of transition words were really important.

As discussed earlier, mistakes concerning the accuracy of sentences in essays were also regarded as very important. Actually, 57 % of all mistakes marked by the teachers concerned accuracy. However, not all these mistake

types and not all mistakes of the same category, such as *noun ending errors*, *sentence structural errors* and *verb errors*, were equally important to them. In other words, error types concerning the linguistic accuracy in the essays were given different levels of importance. The teachers regarded verb errors, sentence structural errors and errors concerning wrong word choice quite important. The tense and form (especially the voice) of the verbs, incomplete sentences and wrong word use were regarded quite serious since these errors had a great impact on the meaning to be conveyed.

It can be stated that more mistakes related with accuracy of the sentences (53 %) than those related with the content (30 %) and organization (13 %) of the essays were marked by the teachers. However, this might have stemmed from the fact that there are 7 categories that are related with the accuracy whereas content and organization each constitute one category only. Therefore, more errors under the category of accuracy than those concerning content and organization might have been marked. Also, since the teachers listed the mistakes of content and organization before the mistakes related with accuracy, it can be concluded that they cared a lot for the content and organization of the essays. A list where one of the teachers ordered different mistakes can be shown below. As can be seen in the list, this teacher ordered mistakes related with content and organization before the mistakes of accuracy.

Judging Error Gravity

Please list the errors in the text from the most serious to less serious ones.

Essay 4:

- 1- I think, these reasons more important money
Category: Content & Organization / not a clear thesis statement (line: 5-6)
- 2- (the above mentioned sentence)
Category: Grammar (line: 5-6)
- 3- I want to start being social
Category: announcement / not a good topic sentence (line: 6)
- 4- the above mentioned sentence
Category: not related to the exam question (Content) (line: 6)
- 5- When people apply for a job, they can have lots of friends
Category: a bit awkward / Content (line: 9)
- 6- In the world, ...
Category: Content & Organization (line: 12)
- 7- the whole paragraph
Category: tears down the ideas discussed / Content & Organization (line: 16-18)
- 8- Nobody can't
Category: Use of English (line: 7)
- 9- will be having got
Category: Use of English (line: 9)
- 10- intelligent
Category: wrong word (line: 14)

Illustration V.I.A sample showing the priorities of teachers concerning error seriousness

These findings do not support the findings of Hyland and Anan (2006), who stated that agreement and word form errors were the most disturbing ones to the non-native teachers since they were violating the basic grammar rules because the teachers in this study found those errors of accuracy that affect the meaning in the essays. In addition, the findings of Applebee (1981), who

concluded that the teachers viewed mechanical errors more important than other types of problems in the essays were not supported in this study. Like these researchers, Zamel (1985) contended that teachers attend to primarily surface level features and if they deal with issues related with content and organization of essays, they do so after sorting out problems of accuracy, often very shortly in the margins.

The reason for the difference between the writing teachers working at Atılım University and those taking part in the studies of abovementioned researchers concerning their perceptions of gravity of different mistake types might stem from the institutional differences. Writing teachers constitute a separate unit at Atılım University Preparatory School and these teachers teach only writing whereas other teachers working at the same institution teach other skills, grammar and vocabulary. Since there are other teachers who are responsible for grammar and vocabulary, most of the writing teachers feel that it is not and should not be their duty to deal with issues of grammar and vocabulary but their main responsibility should be to teach students to express their ideas clearly in an organized way. As mentioned before, these teachers also care about some grammatical and vocabulary related problems especially if these affect the content of the essays.

On the other hand, two of the teachers (20 %) thought that grammar and vocabulary errors were more important than or almost as important as problems of content and organization as illustrated by their answers in the questionnaire and the list of the essay marking task where they showed their ordering of the significance of different mistakes. Their recordings of essay

marking task showed that these teachers thought good use of the language was of great importance since it was impossible to produce good content without good use of the language. Their feedback was also on accuracy of the language, showing that being able to use basic rules of grammar was a great necessity, as mentioned by Hyland and Anan (2006). A list where one of these teachers showed her evaluation of different mistakes can be seen below. It can be seen in the list that almost all the mistakes she regarded as important are related with use of English, vocabulary and mechanics.

Judging Error Gravity

Please list the errors in the text from the most serious to less serious ones.

Essay 6:

- 1- it can be benefit in your life
Category: Reference Error, preposition missing (line: 3)
pl.
- 2- ... when you talking other person
Category: Use of English (line: 11)
- 3- it can be benefit in your next life
Category: Vocabulary / wrong + wrong (line: 6)
- 4- ... can change your life. It can be first good step ...
Category: Vocabulary / wrong word (line: 15)
- 5- Experiences are important in people's life.
Category: Use of English (line: 2)
- 6- You can find a job in there
Category: Use of English, Vocabulary (line: 5)
- 7- Because, lots of company want this feature.
Category: Vocabulary and punctuation (line: 8)
- 8- going abroad is very important in young people's
Category: preposition (line: 14)
- 9- ... when you apply a ...
Category: preposition (line: 7)
- 10- they understand how to develop your ideas
Category: meaningless (line: 12)

Illustration V.II. A sample showing the priorities of teachers concerning error seriousness

Apart from these two teachers who viewed their role as that of language teachers, a teacher who stated that content and organization were very important for her mentioned that giving feedback on the grammar of the students and trying to teach these students the correct forms were her responsibility. This confirms the findings of Zamel (1985), who concluded that writing teachers view themselves as also language teachers.

That some writing teachers think correcting language use mistakes and teaching students to use language accurately is their main concern might result from their backgrounds. If these teachers have been taught writing by teachers who attended mostly to the issues of grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, they may have acquired the impression that these are the main issues of writing. Moreover, institutional rules like the grading criteria imposed on the writing teachers might cause these teachers to believe that accuracy is more important than message and organization. As mentioned before, the essays are evaluated out of 15 points at the institution and the distribution of grades to the components is as follows:

Use of English: 5

Vocabulary:3

Content: 4

Organization:3

As can be seen above, Use of English is given the most importance in the scale. The teachers may think this is what the administration asks them to follow and so teachers should concentrate on the accuracy of language more

than the other components. This was pointed out by one of the teachers who were interviewed as shown below:

I regard organization and content much more important than other issues despite the fact that the administration thinks and tries to impose on us just the opposite.(T-4)

It is undeniable that a teacher's perceptions of the gravity of different components of a composition play a big role in the focus of the feedback the teacher provides students with. When teachers think that accuracy is more important than content and organization, their feedback is likely to focus on accuracy, or vice versa. This was the case with the teachers taking part in this study. The teachers who mentioned that they care most about the content and organization gave quite a lot of feedback (usually in the form of short notes and comments). They also provided feedback concerning the accuracy, though since they also stated that some mistake types concerning accuracy are also bothersome for them. This is parallel with the findings of Ersen (2000), who pointed out that the teachers she investigated took grammar, organization, content, vocabulary and mechanics into account and provided feedback on these components. However, two of the teachers who stated that they cared most about accuracy provided almost all their feedback on the correctness of the language used, writing very few and short comments concerning meaning and organization.

When the feedback preferences of the students in different contexts were investigated, it was found out that the students liked receiving feedback focusing on both the content and organization of the essays and grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, as well (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Coşkun, 2007;

Enginarlar, 1993; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Although feedback preferences of the students studying at the Preparatory school of Atılım University where the study was conducted were not investigated, it can be concluded that students might be content with the feedback they receive from most of the teachers (in terms of the focus of the feedback, not form) since almost all students like a feedback procedure focusing on all the components.

Lastly, it can be concluded that teachers' priorities regarding the problems in an essay and their feedback may change in some conditions. It was pointed out by two of the teachers who viewed content and organization as the most important factors that when the students' sentences contain too many grammar mistakes, they may find themselves unintentionally dealing only with the accuracy, ignoring the content related and organizational issues. In this case, their main concern turns out to be the accuracy of the language used. This is completely in accordance with the claims of Zamel (1985), who pointed out that the teachers stop thinking about the meaning and organization of the essays when the sentences are full of grammar mistakes. Zamel (1985) also concluded that this results in teachers' giving incorrect feedback or making incorrect revisions in students' essays since the meaning the students really want to convey requires different corrections.

This may be an indicator of the teachers' beliefs that without being able to use the language correctly enough to make 'intelligible' sentences, it is impossible to express good content or produce a good piece of writing. However, 'intelligibility' of a piece of sentence might change from person to person. Therefore, the teachers' ratings of the same writing might show

differences, causing some annoyance to both the students and administration, even the teachers themselves.

V.II. Teachers' preferences concerning selective and comprehensive marking

When the teachers' choices in the questionnaire and answers in the interview were examined, it was found out that 60 % of these teachers preferred comprehensive marking while 40 % of them were in favour of marking students' mistakes selectively. Among the reasons why these teachers prefer comprehensive marking are as follows:

- Since the students at upper-intermediate level have already been exposed to most of the grammar rules, pointing out the mistakes of these rules do not discourage the students.(T-10)
- Students would not be aware of the mistakes if the teachers do not mark them.(T-1, T-6, T-8)
- It is the teachers' responsibility to mark all the errors to teach students better.(T-2)
- Marking and giving feedback on all mistakes help students to become better writers and use the language more efficiently.(T-7, T-2)

Below are the reasons teachers present for marking mistakes selectively.

- Selective marking is time saving.(T-4)
- Comprehensive marking is discouraging.(T-1, T-3)
- It is not necessary to mark some types of mistakes such as spelling and punctuation since students make these mistakes as they are not careful enough while writing. If they were careful, they would not make them.(T-4)

It has already been put forward by researchers such as Agosti (2006), Hyland & Anan (2006) and Lee (2003) that most of the teachers mark the mistakes in student essays comprehensively for some reasons such as believing that it is one of the roles of a teacher, not knowing how to carry out selective marking, institutional rules and demand for comprehensive marking from students and parents. Although Ellis *et al* (2008) suggest that learners can

develop a better understanding of the nature of errors and can correct them and learn from their mistakes if selective marking is implemented, it has also been suggested by Hendrickson (1981) and Wong (2007) that marking mistakes selectively or comprehensively does not create different outcomes in the writing ability of the students. Moreover, marking student mistakes is more exhausting and time consuming than carrying out selective marking (Enginarlar, 1993; Lee, 2003).

The reason why most of the teachers at the Preparatory school of Atılım University prefer comprehensive marking may be because of the rules of the institution. These teachers have to implement comprehensive marking while marking student essays and since they have been used to this approach, they may prefer it. Their preference of marking mistakes comprehensively could be an indicator of the teachers' perception of good writing and of the roles of writing teachers. These teachers might hold the idea that error free writing is desirable although they claim that content and organization of the essays are more important than the accuracy of the language. This may show that they also care a lot about the accuracy and believe that marking all the mistakes would enable students to use language more correctly. Another reason for their preference of comprehensive marking may be because of the reason that they believe it is one of a teacher's main responsibilities to mark and give feedback on all the mistakes of learners and they would not fulfil all their duties if they ignored some mistakes. What is more, they might prefer comprehensive marking thinking that students would be happier if they become aware of their mistakes and receive feedback on them all. It has been pointed out that most of

the students want their teachers to indicate all their mistakes and give them a chance to correct them (Agosti, 2006; Eyllenen, 2008; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Coşkun (2007) suggests that the majority of the students want their teachers to mark all the major mistakes but not the minor ones while a minority of the students would prefer comprehensive marking. This preference of the students may again be an indicator of a goal of mistake free writing.

One of the teachers interviewed stated that her marking of mistakes would change from student to student. When the level of the student is not good enough and this student feels demotivated when s/he sees the paper full of marking, she does not mark all the errors but marks the ones that are major or more serious for the intelligibility of the message. However, some students whose proficiency levels are quite high ask their teachers to indicate all their mistakes and are ready to correct them all. This shows that the teachers' markings may change depending on the preferences of the students.

As mentioned above, 40 % of the teachers prefer selective marking which is believed to be time saving and less discouraging. These teachers might believe that now that a writing teacher's role is to enable the students to produce good content and present their ideas in an organised way, marking mistakes selectively is preferable and they may mark only major mistakes but not minor ones, or choose mistakes to be marked depending on the needs of the student. This may be because they think that letting students think about the mistakes that are marked in accordance with their needs or gravity of the mistakes would create better results since these students would concentrate on the marked mistakes only and learn better. Also, they might believe that

writing classes should foster the acquisition of the points that are being taught in grammar classes and select the mistakes to mark accordingly.

V.III. Teachers' preferences regarding feedback techniques

When the teachers' markings of the essays were examined, it was seen that 90 % of the teachers preferred marking mistakes by underlining them and writing codes showing the types of mistakes. Only 10 % of the teachers preferred marking the mistakes by underlining them only. Besides, most of the teachers (80 %) wrote comments reminding some students of some grammatical rules or showing the weaknesses in the content and organizations of the essays, with only a few comments pointing out the strengths. An essay marked using error codes along with some comments can be seen below.

Essay 5

Giving exams to students periodically adds a lot to their success. Why / Why not? Write your ideas of between 180-220 words.

1 DON'T AFRAID OF EXAMS →
(verb)

2 Always, there is an education during the human civilization. People go to school for
(verb) (ww)
3 ages because of many reasons. Some techniques are applied to observe the success of
(phrase which) (verb)
4 students. The most important technique is exam for some reasons. Giving exams create a
(plural)
5 competition atmosphere between students in the class and the students are always ready for
6 the exam.

7 Firstly, exams create a competition atmosphere between students in the class. The
(ww)
8 students want to get higher marks than others. This situation become their aim and they
(verb)
9 always think to be successfull. At the end of the year, the result is surprising.
(sp) (sp) ?? what do you mean? Explain clearly!

10 Secondly, If you give exams to students periodically, they are always ready for the
(ww) (p)
11 exam. It is very important; because in the education, revision is so necessary. The more
(ww)
12 revision students do, the higher marks they get. Students are studied by the periodically
(verb) (present) (ww)
13 exams.

14 In the sum up, education is important for peoples and we have to learn if education is
(ww) (verb) ? not clear!
15 usefull. Giving periodically exams add a lot to students' success. Don't afraid of them!
(sp) (ww) (verb) (sp) ↓
concluding paragraph is not well-developed!

Illustration V.III. A sample showing teachers' feedback preferences

The questionnaire results also showed that using error codes was the most frequently chosen feedback technique and it was followed by writing comments. 'Indicating, correcting and coding mistakes' was the next

frequently used technique. The fourth frequently used technique was indicating and correcting mistakes while indicating but not correcting was the fifth frequently used feedback technique.

As mentioned by Ferris (2006), most of the teachers preferred using error codes while indicating mistakes for several reasons. Among these reasons were:

- Codes help students revise their work better since they know the meaning of the codes.(T-2, T-7)
- Codes direct the students to the correct forms in the second draft where the students have a chance to correct and learn from their mistakes.(T-1, T-2, T-4)
- Students feel more motivated when they see the codes since it is easier to correct the mistakes when the codes are present.(T-1, T-4)

Another feedback technique that the teachers stated they use is correcting the mistakes directly. The teachers pointed out they corrected mistakes themselves when:

- the sentence written by the student includes a lot of mistakes.(T-4, T-5)
- that student is unlikely to write a second draft.(T-4)
- it is a vocabulary mistake since the student cannot refer to any source to correct vocabulary mistakes, which are untreatable errors.(T-1, T-4)

Using codes is an indirect feedback type since the students themselves are supposed to correct their mistakes whereas teachers' providing the correct forms is direct error feedback. It has been put forward that using indirect feedback techniques creates better results (Lee, 1997; Robb et al, 1986) and that indirect feedback is more useful in the long term while direct feedback proves to be more advantageous in the short term (Ferris, 2002). One can conclude that the teachers in this study gave indirect feedback more frequently than direct feedback and this feedback is more useful in the long term.

However, it has also been concluded that using different feedback types does not lead to differential student improvement (Eylenen, 2008; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al, 1986; Tmkaya, 2003). Therefore, the effort made by teachers while giving different types of feedback does not equal the improvement students make in their writing performance since some feedback types such as writing codes requires more time than others such as just underlining mistakes, and they do not ensure greater success. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the writing teachers who preferred to use error codes in more than half of the cases spend more time and effort than necessary.

Part of the reason for the teachers' using error codes may be attributed to the institutional rules and their habits. The writing teachers at the Preparatory school at Atılım University have to use codes while marking student essays and their habit might have turned into a preference. This may also be because of their observation over time since in the interviews they mentioned that when the error codes are used, students make more corrections in the second draft. Actually, the teachers go on using the codes despite the shortcomings that are accepted by them. They complain that some students do not know the meaning of codes and do not bother learning them.

There may be several reasons why the teachers sometimes prefer correcting the mistakes. The teachers might correct the mistakes when they believe that the student cannot correct them and s/he will have to ask it, creating more workload for the teacher since the teacher will have to provide the correct form later anyway. Also, some students do not write a second draft and in that case codes do not mean anything to them. However, when the

teachers give the correct forms, they hope the student will pay more attention to the returned paper, at least before the exams and help creating a more accurate work. As Ferris (1999), Kubota (2001) and Myer (1997) state, vocabulary mistakes which are among untreatable errors should be corrected since there are not any sources students can consult to provide the correct forms. Therefore, some writing teachers give the correct word when the students use wrong words, since they have seen during their profession that when students try -if they do- to correct vocabulary mistakes, they are likely to come up with worse vocabulary, as pointed out by one of the teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers' habits and past observations play a big role in the feedback type they prefer to use. Also, their feedback type changes depending on the student and mistake types.

All the teachers who were interviewed believed that the students made use of feedback from the teachers in order to improve their writing skills. However, they had different ideas on the usefulness of feedback in different components of writing. Three of the five teachers who were interviewed stated that students make most use of grammar and mechanics feedback in the short term while content and organization feedback was more useful in the long term. They supported their beliefs saying that at the end of an academic year at the Preparatory school, all the students have a notion of what good writing is and they are aware of and care about the content related and organizational issues. What is more, the professors at the faculties tell the writing teachers at the Preparatory school that the students have a good knowledge of content related and organizational issues. However, that these students still make quite

a lot of grammar and vocabulary mistakes at the end of the academic year is an indicator that feedback in these areas does not prove so useful in the long term. This view of the teachers supports the results of Kepner (1991) and Sheppard (1992) that while form feedback is more useful in the short term, content feedback is more helpful in the long term.

On the other hand, two of the five teachers believe that students make most use of the feedback in grammar and mechanics both in the short and the long terms. As Ashwell (2000) suggests, these teachers believe the feedback on form is more useful to improve the accuracy of the students than the feedback on content and organization given in order for the students to create better content and organization. One of these teachers stated that the students make most use of feedback in spelling and punctuation, as Lalande (1982) suggests. Both of them put forward that the students' content and organization is good not because of the feedback given to them each week, but because the teachers warn them to write a thesis statement, provide clear examples and so on while they are writing a composition each week. They claim that if the teachers were not with the students and did not warn them, they would not be able to produce good content and express themselves in such an organized way. They believe the writing teachers spoon-feed the students since they always remind them of issues related with content and organization while writing.

The reason for the superiority of feedback in the areas of grammar and mechanics is due to the fact that it is easier to correct the mistakes of these types since the students are helped and directed by the error codes. Also, the students are more eager to deal with grammar and mechanics mistakes since

correcting them requires less time. However, producing better content with more developed ideas and presenting them in a more organized way is harder since it requires longer time. Therefore, most of the students do not bother dealing with the problems of content and organization in their second draft, but just correct the mistakes related with grammar, vocabulary -if not corrected by the teachers- and mechanics.

The reason for the effectiveness of content and organization feedback over grammar feedback in the long term may be because of the writing teachers' emphasizing the importance of content related and organizational issues while teaching their classes. Although content related and organizational issues are given a lot of importance and occur in the materials the teachers use, issues related with grammar, mechanics and vocabulary are not focused on while teaching writing classes. Also, attaining perfect accuracy of the language requires a lot of practice. Although the students revise grammatical points in their courses, most of the revision is either mechanical or sometimes guided. Since they do not produce the language anywhere except in the writing classes, they cannot produce work without grammar mistakes. As mentioned by some writing teachers, teachers that are responsible for teaching accuracy should enable students to produce the language and they should care for the grammatical or some mechanical mistakes whereas writing teachers should focus on teaching the students to be able to express good content in an organized way.

The teachers agreed that their feedback changes form and focus depending on the student and how far it is in the course. If the student is not

likely to write a second draft or know the meaning of the codes, the teachers would rather write the correct forms for the mistakes. What is more, as they know the students and their needs in time, the focus of their feedback changes. For example, if they think that the student needs to change his style (from informal to formal), their feedback focuses on changing the style. Lastly, as the students learn more, the teachers expect a more accurate use of language, a larger vocabulary and a better organization with better expressed ideas. Therefore, their comments become harsher.

This shows that, although they have a preferred feedback technique, the teachers may change their practices depending on the context and student. They are aware that every technique does not work with every student, and observing and knowing the needs and perceptions of students towards writing is important.

V.IV. Compatibility of the teachers' claims with their performance

The results of the essay marking task showed that 80 % of the teachers paid quite a lot of attention to the organization and content of upper intermediate level students. Mistakes of vocabulary, verb forms and sentence structure were also very important for these since they had an effect on the meaning to be conveyed. However, 20 % of the teachers were mostly concerned with the mistakes of grammar and then vocabulary. These mistakes were very disturbing for them. The findings were compatible with the results of the questionnaire and the interviews since 80 % of the teachers had also showed and stated that content and organization were very important for them, adding that they also cared about the mistakes of vocabulary, some verb errors

and sentence structural mistakes since these had an effect on the contents of the essays. They also added that not all mistakes of the same category were equally important since some had greater effect on the meaning. The results of the questionnaires again showed that 20 % of the teachers thought mistakes of grammar were more than or as important as problems regarding the content and organization of the essays. They defended themselves saying that without accuracy, it was impossible for a student to create good content and to present it in an organized way.

As for the feedback preferences of the teachers, the essay marking task showed that most of the teachers (90 %) preferred to use error codes in order to mark the mistakes. Only 10 % of the teachers just underlined the mistakes without giving any clues about the type of errors. Another form of feedback the teachers (80 %) used was writing comments on the organizations and content of the essays as well as comments reminding a grammatical rule, or examples showing the use of some grammatical points. The teachers' answers in the questionnaire and the interviews also showed that their most preferred feedback technique was using the codes and writing brief comments. However, they stated that they sometimes corrected some mistakes of some students especially when they thought that the student is unlikely to write a second draft, and the mistake is of vocabulary use, since the students have no sources to consult in order to find the word to be used in that context.

One can conclude from these findings that the teachers' claims about their perceptions of the seriousness of mistakes found in the writings of upper-intermediate level students and their preferences regarding feedback techniques

were compatible with what they were actually doing while marking and evaluating essays. The teachers who had stated in the questionnaire and the interviews that the content related and organizational problems were of most importance for them had also listed them as the most important problems of the essays while marking them. Similarly, the ones who mentioned that mistakes of accuracy were more important than other matters had listed them as the most disturbing mistakes while evaluating the compositions. Thus, it was observed in some papers and assumed that these perceptions of the teachers would affect their feedback and their feedback would focus on the aspects of writing that disturbed them most.

The result is surprising in that most of the researchers claimed that there were very big discrepancies between the claims and performance of teachers regarding error seriousness and feedback provision. Lee (2009) claimed that teachers pay most attention to language form but they believe there is more good to writing than accuracy. However, most of the teachers in this study also believed that content and organization were as vital as accuracy and they listed the problems of those as more important than the mistakes of accuracy. Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings of this study did not support the finding of Lee (2009). The reason for this may stem from the fact that the teachers in this study were responsible for teaching only writing, not other skills or grammar, since writing is a separate unit at the institution. They view their role as teaching students how to write essays with good content and organization. As it was other teachers' duty to teach grammar, vocabulary and other skills, they feel that they do not have to deal with all these components

unless content of the essays does not require students to do so. If the mistakes of grammar and vocabulary as well as spelling do not affect the meaning, the writing teachers mention that they are not as important as problems regarding content and organization. However, there are some teachers who felt that accuracy is as important as or more important than issues of content and organization. These teachers feel that it is impossible to produce good content without being able to use the language correctly. This shows that some writing teachers are very disturbed by the presence of mistakes concerning the accuracy. This may be because of these teachers' perceptions about their role at the institution. They may view themselves as responsible for fostering the things taught at classes of grammar and vocabulary. Actually, one of the teachers who mentioned that content and organization of an essay were the most significant components also stated that her responsibilities ranged from improving these as well as the accuracy of the students. This shows that the teachers had different ideas about their roles at the institution. Moreover, this shows that error free writing is the aim of these teachers who might have been influenced from their backgrounds as students since it is known that error free language was very important before the approaches such as communicative approach which underline the importance of conveyance of the message. If these teachers have been educated by some teachers who thought accuracy was very important, they might think accuracy is vital, as well.

Lee (2009) concludes that although teachers mostly prefer selective marking, they mark student errors comprehensively. However, most of the teachers (60 %) in this study preferred comprehensive marking. This

preference of them may be because of their habits at the institution where comprehensive marking must be carried out. Also, they believe that comprehensive marking is more advantageous than selective marking since the students see all their mistakes and try to correct them all. They state that implementing comprehensive marking is harder but it is their duty as a teacher to mark all the mistakes so that the students are aware of all their mistakes, and do not think that the unmarked parts are all correct. However, they also state that for some students they carry out selective marking so that these students are not discouraged as they are very sensitive about having too many mistakes on their paper and feel bad when they see so many codes and comments. When the teachers' markings of the essays were examined, it was found out that all the teachers had marked the mistakes comprehensively. It might be thought that there is a discrepancy between the claims of these teachers and their actual performances but this might stem from the design of the study. The instructors were instructed to show their ratings of different problems in the essays and in order to evaluate which mistakes were more serious; they had to find and mark all the mistakes. However, if they had not been instructed to think about all the mistakes, they might have ignored some of the mistakes and their markings could have been selective. An essay marked comprehensively by one of the teachers who stated that s/he preferred selective marking can be seen below.

Essay 7

Doing sports regularly helps to stay healthy and keep fit. Why/Why not? Write your ideas of between 180-220 words.

1 IMPORTANCE OF DOING SPORTS

2 Most of people live in stress in their daily life. Dealing with problems, we can forget
3 ourselves. we can't give importance health that we cannot bring it back once we lose it.

4 Because of our responsibilities, we can't escape from this situation. Doing sports can help to
5 stay healthy in this issue. If done, doing sports provides some advantages for us.

6 First of all, we can be peaceful thanks to doing sports. Unfortunately we cannot stay to
7 be calm in our daily life. Problems always follow us. Doing sports, we can leave from this
8 situation. Looking at mirror, we see better than previous circumstance.

9 Secondly, we have been sitting in our job during all day. This is not good in terms of
10 physical. Also, this situation can give rise to more serious problem, sometimes. Doing sports,
11 we can save from this situation. For example, working muscle, we can prevent previous
12 situation.

13 All in all, doing sports must be more important in our life. Whatever happens, we have
14 to think ourselves. Doing sports, we can success this, most probably.

Illustration V.IV. A sample for comprehensive marking

Although the teachers' claims were mostly compatible with their performance while evaluating the essays, some contradictions regarding their feedback preferences were observed. These contradictions are given below.

To begin with, Montgomery and Baker (2007) came up with the conclusion that teachers underestimate the amount of feedback they give on grammar and mechanics, and overestimate the amount of feedback on content, organization and vocabulary. It is expected that the teachers direct most of their feedback to the components which they view most important. Since content related and organizational issues as well as problems of accuracy affecting meaning are viewed very disturbing by most of the writing teachers in this study, they are expected to provide most of their feedback in these areas. During the interviews, they stated that they provide students with feedback on content and organization in order to enable them to know their deficiencies and correct them as well as get them to know their strengths. When the papers they marked were examined, it was found out that they wrote short comments on the content and organization of the essays. However, only two of the teachers had written very detailed comments. The other comments were very short ones mostly focusing on the weaknesses of the essays. That is why, it can be stated that the teachers in this study also overestimate the feedback given on content and organization since they failed to write detailed comments. In the marking shown above, it can be seen that the teacher wrote very short comments on content and organization whereas very detailed comments were written by one of the teachers as shown below. First the essay, and then the comment written about it are illustrated.

Essay 2 ✓

Children learn many things by observing the behaviour of adults and copying it. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Support your ideas with examples. (180-200 words)

1 In today's world, there are many children and the number of them ^{wf} are increasing ^{rw} more
2 and more. What is more, ^{lw} they are learning lots of things ^{prep} by their mother, father and other
3 family members. Therefore, in my opinion, the families have ^{isa} many responsibilities ^{prep} for their
4 ^{sp/p} childrens. and ^{wf} they are ^{wf} challenging for many adults but there are very ^{? rw} acceptable ways. There
5 are two main reasons ^{ww} for children who learn many things by observing the behaviour of
6 adults.

7 Firstly, ^{art} process of growing up is very complex for children. Among factors which
8 influence children's growth. For example, after the baby is born, the first and the nearest ^{inc}
9 adults are their parents, and then the baby ^{vt} has started to learn from ^{poss adj} their parents by observing
10 and copying ^{poss adj} the adult's talk. This learning is important for the ^{n prep} babies. ^{sb} (In what ways?)
11 Secondly, on the other hand, adults can influence them ^{rw/p} much more, such as thinking,
12 making ^{pl} decision and connecting with others. The behaviour of adults can ^{pl} give children both
13 good and bad influence ^{prep n}.

14 As a result of these points, the family is the most ^{adj} part of a child's life. Parents ^{ww} give them
15 ^{prep} security and ^{ww} confidence.

Illustration V.V. A sample of detailed comment on a student essay

Feedback

1. a) Lack of relevant topic sent. which should introduce the 1st reason why children learn by observing the behaviour of adults and copying it.
 - c) "factors" needs clarification
 - b) Ideas in this paragr. don't follow a logical order; they are "dangling" / lack of unity and coherence.
 - d) "This learning is important for the baby" should be followed by explanations
2. a) Lack of relevant topic sent. which should introduce the 2nd reason why children learn by observing the behaviour of adults and copying it
 - b) The focus in this paragr. is on adults not on children. The main idea should be developed from the children's point of view not the adults.
 - c) lack of unity and coherence
3. a) Lack of restatement of the thesis.
 - b) Irrelevant info: "security and confidence"
 - c) "adults" in the Intro. has been narrowed down to "family"
4. a) (lines 3-4) "Therefore, --- acceptable ways" The idea in this sentence sounds irrelevant

Illustration V.V. (continued)

In addition, these teachers mentioned that some mistakes of accuracy and mechanics, especially those not having an effect on the meaning were not as important as the problems of content and organization and the mistakes affecting the meaning. Still, they marked all the mistakes found in the essays. This might be an indicator of the fact that they underestimate the amount of feedback given on grammar and mechanics. The reason for marking all the mistakes may be because the teachers cannot stand mistakes although they care most for content and organization. Actually, as can be remembered, most of the teachers were in favour of comprehensive marking for some reasons mentioned before. Besides, the teachers mentioned that the students correct the problems

of accuracy and mechanics in their second draft whereas they do not deal with the problems of content and organizations since these were harder and more time consuming to correct. Therefore, the teachers might want to provide detailed feedback on grammar and mechanics while writing short evaluative comments on the content and organization of the essays. Also, because of the design of the study, the ones who said that they prefer selective marking might have attended to all the mistakes, as expressed before. To conclude, the results of this study bear similarities to the findings of Montgomery and Baker (2007) as well as that of Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), who suggest that teachers believe that students benefit most from the comments on organization but they do not focus enough on organization and they provide more feedback on grammar and vocabulary. As can be remembered, some of the teachers (3 of 5 teachers who were interviewed) in this study believed that the students made more use of feedback on content and organization in the long term. However, the feedback provided in these areas was not in abundance and the comments were not very long and detailed, except for the feedback of only two teachers (20 %).

Secondly, Lee (2009) suggests that despite the fact that all students cannot make use of error codes, teachers prefer to use them. Most of the teachers (90 %) in this study also preferred to use error codes while marking the mistakes although they presented some advantages of using them. One of these disadvantages was that some students do not understand the codes and they do not bother looking at the list given them beforehand in order to understand what the codes mean. Only two of the teachers (20 %) said that

they stopped using the codes when they felt that the student was not able to make use of them. The others went on using the codes though they knew that not all the students would be able to understand them. This might be because of the fact that the teachers think the codes are useful since they lead the students to think about their mistakes more and correct them. They might think that it is the students' responsibility to memorise the meanings of codes or at least consult the list given them when they do not understand the codes. They might believe that they fulfil their responsibility as a teacher when they provide the students with a list showing what the codes mean.

Last but not least, Lee (2009) points out that teachers focus on students' written errors but they know that they will occur again. The writing teachers pointed out that they mark the mistakes using codes and some students can correct them for their second draft. However, they also stated that these students make the same kinds of mistakes in their subsequent works. Still, they go on marking these mistakes. This might show that the teachers are so disturbed by the presence of the mistakes that they mark them despite the fact that they know the mistakes will be made again.

To sum up, it might be concluded at the end of this study that the teachers' perceptions of the seriousness of different types of mistakes might be affected by their perceived roles and the rules at the institutions, their backgrounds and their habits. The characters of the students, their requests and the types of mistakes as well as the factors mentioned above have an influence on the feedback preferences of these teachers. Also, although the teachers'

claims about the issues above are quite compatible with their actual performances, there may be some contradictions in their performance.

V.V. IMPLICATIONS

At the end of study, the teachers' priorities about the importance of different mistake types and their preferences of feedback provision were revealed. It was also found out that the teachers' priorities and preferences differ concerning the above mentioned issues. Some implications for the institution from the study can be drawn.

First of all, there should be a meeting with the writing teachers and the administration, teachers trainers, testing unit and curriculum developers and the aims of the writing classes and the roles and responsibilities of the writing teachers should be made clear. Every teacher should teach his/her class bearing the aim of the writing classes in mind. Additionally, the teachers' ideas about the existing system should be examined by the decision makers and a revision of the existing system must be made. The feedback provision procedure already followed could be changed since almost all the teachers at the institution complain that the students do not take content and organization related feedback into account and do not make revisions in their work in these aspects. A commonly agreed procedure in which the students need to make corrections taking content and organization related feedback, as well as feedback on the accuracy into account must be implemented. Also, the teachers ideas on the evaluation criteria must be taken and necessary changes must be made. Lastly, the students preferences about the feedback they would like to

receive along with their reasons should be explored, and the efficiency of different feedback techniques with these students ought to be found out.

V.VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The teachers' real performances while giving feedback and marking the mistakes may be different since while evaluating the essays and giving feedback in this study they knew that there would be no students receiving the papers back. This is because each teacher had to mark the same papers as their reactions to the same papers and the same mistakes had to be examined. Although they were instructed to mark the papers and provide feedback as if they were addressing students, their feedback might have been different if they had known that the students would receive the papers back and write a second draft. Moreover, because of the design of the study, the teachers' real performance while marking the mistakes (in terms of selective and comprehensive marking) might not have been truly revealed. Since the teachers were instructed to show the importance of different problems in the compositions, they were directed to all the mistakes and this might have affected their marking the mistakes in terms of selective and comprehensive marking. Some of the teachers might have marked the essays selectively if they had not been directed to the mistakes by the researcher. Besides, the effects of marking errors selectively or comprehensively on writing achievement of students were not explored. In addition, only papers written by students at the upper-intermediate level were marked in this study. The teachers' markings and feedback might be different while marking the essays written by students at other levels. Last but not least, only ten teachers took part in this study and

they marked only ten papers since marking a higher number of essays would result in more load to the teachers. However, if there were more teachers and more papers to mark, different results could have been attained.

V.VII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to create a feedback system mutually appreciated by the students and the teachers at the institution, the students' preferences regarding feedback (in terms of the focus and form of it) and their reasons may be investigated. Thus, it may be possible to see if the preferences of teachers and students match or not. Apart from that, the efficiency of different feedback techniques, as well as that of selective or comprehensive marking for these students both in the short term and the long term may be explored. Also, the effects of these feedback techniques on students' achievement may be investigated. Lastly, the teachers' ideas on the seriousness of different mistake types and their preferences regarding feedback provision at other levels may be studied in order to see if their priorities and preferences change depending on the proficiency level of the students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Essays to be marked

Essay 1

In the Turkish movie industry, in order to make money films which lack artistic quality and only aim at entertainment are made. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give your opinion with specific examples. (180-200 words)

UNQUALIFIED LORDS

Film industry is one of the biggest sector in 21st century. Producers are purchasing million dollars to make films with high quality. However, films haven't gone beyond the mediocre level in our country. Day by day, people facing more and more poor quality films in Turkey. There are some reasons of this situation such as low quality visual effects, stolen scenarios and uneducated actors.

Firstly, Turkish producers are just aimed at earning much more money. The reflection of this situation can be seen in movies. For example, they are using poor quality visual and sound effects to spend less money on production. Consequently, it leads the decrease on quality.

Secondly, script-writers are far away from creativity. They prefer copy-pasting the already prepared foreign scenarios to create new ideas and being authentic. Thus, people don't want to watch stolen ideas and the quality of the films goes down.

Lastly, all singers and models having part in Turkish films. They think; beauty and appearance is more important than ability. Consequently, actors can't experience the same feeling with their roles, and the scenario doesn't attract you.

As far as I'm concerned, productions aren't very qualified because of poor effects, stolen scenarios and uneducated actors. Unless Turkish producers give up imitating Hollywood or any other foreign cinema, Turkish film industry can't go up even a step.

Essay 2

Children learn many things by observing the behaviour of adults and copying it. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Support your ideas with examples. (180-200 words)

In today's world, there are many children and the number of them are increasing more and more. What is more, they are learning lots of things by their mother, father and other family members. Therefore, in my opinion, the families have many responsibilities for their childrens. and they are challenging for many adults but there are very acceptable ways. There are two main reasons for children who learn many things by observing the behaviour of adults.

Firstly, process of growing up is very complex for children. Among factors which influence children's growth. For example, after the baby is born, the first and the nearest adults are their parents, and then the baby has started to learn from their parents by observing and copying the adult's talk. This learning is important for the babies.

Secondly, on the other hand, adults can influence them much more, such as thinking, making decision and connecting with others. The behaviour of adults can give children both good and bad influence

As a result of these points, the family is the most part of a child's life. Parents give them security and confidence.

Essay 3

A student's main purpose in getting an education is to earn a lot of money. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give your opinion with specific examples. (180-200 words)

THE BEST WAY TO EARN MONEY

Since we were born, we have been studying for education. We have passed every class step by step but why? It's a very important question. Why we have been studying for many year. In my opinion, we have been studying to earn a lot of money. There are several reasons why I believe so.

For one thing, If we have a good education, we will have a good job but earning a lot of money based on not only good education but also improving ourselves. For example doing a master is a good way to improve ourselves. This situation results in a good carrier.

In addition to this, having a good education leads to more comfortable life. We can provide a good life to our parents. We can send our children the best school, and so they still study and they can earn a lot of money to continue their lives.

As you see, studying a lot leads to a very good life to us. I believe that people who wants to a good job study a lot because if we dont have a good carrier, good education we wont have a good job. Also we must improve ourselves. Therefore the more money we have, the happier life we get.

Essay 4

A student's main purpose in getting an education is to earn a lot of money. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give your opinion with specific examples. (180-200 words)

WHICH IS IMPORTANT?

There are lots of people in the world who have got different objectives about education. Some people wants to be doctor, some people wants to be an engineer etc. I think people should develope theirselves. In addition, people should be social. I think, these reasons more important money.

Firstly, I want to start being social. For ages people try to be social. Trying social is important people. Because it is necessary for people's life. Nobody can't live without friends or family. How can we be social? For example, we can go to universities or other schools. When people go there, they will be having got lots of friends. I want to give other example. When people apply for a job, they can have lots of friends, too. And this provides being social.

Secondly, we can't live without informations. We must develope ourselves. In the world, there are many schools and courses for people. We can learn a lot of things about whatever we want. It makes people open-minded and intelligent. Therefore, people go on their lives easily.

To sum up, money should be unnecessary while we are getting an education. We should have different objectives instead of money. It makes people better and gives people better lives.

Essay 5

Giving exams to students periodically adds a lot to their success. Why / Why not? Write your ideas of between 180-220 words.

DON'T AFRAID OF EXAMS

Always, there is an education during the human civilization. People go to school for ages because of many reasons. Some techniques are applied to observe the success of students. The most important technique is exam for some reasons. Giving exams create a competition atmosphere between students in the class and the students are always ready for the exam.

Firstly, exams create a competition atmosphere between students in the class. The students want to get higher marks than others. This situation become their aim and they always think to be successfull. At the end of the year, the result is suprising.

Secondly, If you give exams to students periodically, they are always ready for the exam. It is very important; because in the education, revision is so necessary. The more revision students do, the higher marks they get. Students are studied by the periodically exams.

In the sum up, education is important for peoples and we have to learn if education is usefull. Giving periodically exams add a lot to students' success. Don't afraid of them!

Essay 6

Young people should go abroad at least once before they are 20. What are the reasons behind this opinion? Write your ideas of between 180-220 words.

FIRST STEP TO LIFE

Experiences are important in people's life. When you are young, if you have experiences, it can be benefit in your life. Young people should go abroad at least once before they are 20 for some reasons.

Firstly, you can find a job in there. You see life's difficulties. You become self assured person when you become succesful, so it can be benefit in your next life. You earn money.

Secondly, you can learn different languages. It is very important when you apply a job. Because, lots of company want this feature. If you learn different languages very well, you can work as a tourist-guide.

Thirdly, you can learn different cultures. If you learn different cultures, your status'll increase. In our country status is very important. For example, when you talking other person, they understand how to develop your ideas. In addition, they respect you, so you become a self-assured person.

In conclusion, going abroad is very important in young people's life. This experience can change your life. It can be first good step in your life.

Essay 7

**Doing sports regularly helps to stay healthy and keep fit. Why/Why not?
Write your ideas of between 180-220 words.**

IMPORTANCE OF DOING SPORTS

Most of people live in stress in their daily life. Dealing with problems, we can forget ourselves. we can't give importance health that we cannot bring it back once we lose it. Because of our responsibilities, we can't escape from this situation. Doing sports can helps to stay healthy in this issue. If done, doing sports provides some advantages for us.

First of all, we can be peaceful thanks to doing sports. Unfortunately we cannot stay to be calm in our daily life. Problems always follow us. Doing sports, we can leave from this situation. Looking at mirror, we see better than previous circumstance.

Secondly, we have been sitting in our job during all day. This is not good in terms of physical. Also, this situation can give rise to more serious problem, sometimes. Doing sports, we can save from this situation. For example, working muscle, we can prevent previous situation.

All in all, doing sports must be more important in our life. Whatever happens, we have to think ourselves. Doing sports, we can success this, most probably.

Essay 8

Some people like travelling in a group with a tourist guide. However, some others claim that it causes some problems. What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling with a companion? Discuss both sides in between 180-220 words.

TOUR GUIDE

Many tourist has visited some place. They spend enjoyable time in place which is not important whatever they want. Sometimes travelling in a group has some advantages and also it has disadvantages.

The first advantage is that you spend enjoyable time by doing this you don't feel lonely yourself. For instance a tourist guide put in order to some activity and you feel perfect at the end of it. The second advantage is that tourist guide surroundings is absolutely friendliest than another things as a result you met new good friends in there. The last advantage is that tourist guide surroundings is very relaxable so if you go there you wouldn't close your mind and you don't think bad stuff. For example you think, you go a travelling in a group with a tourist guide and you spend more attractive time with your group, "do you think bad things"

The first disadvantage is that touris guide surroundings have had rules you must obey the rules but you mustn't you get sucked in there. For example you don't smoke wherever you want. The second advantages is that you mustn't disturb other people so sometimes you aren't relaxable there. For instance if you lough too noisy, you would get sucked there.

All in all, travelling in a group with a tourist guide brings some advantages and disadvantages I think if you go there, you would happy.

Essay 9

Some people like travelling in a group with a tourist guide. However, some others claim that it causes some problems. What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling with a companion? Discuss both sides in between 180-220 words.

TRAVELLING

Many people want to travel abroad or domestic. Travelling is various ways. Some people like travelling in with a group. However, some others claim that it causes some problems.

The first advantages is that when people travel in with a group, They are enjoyable For example; people meet new friends. Another advantages is that people communicate with different people and different culture. Lastly advantages is that A group is planned A group supply a plan for people thus people have to make plan.

On the another hand, Firstly people can't want to go to everywhere because A group have got a plan. Secondly, some people can dislike a group friends. For example; They agree their group friends. Lastly, People can't want a group plan's so People is unhappy.

To sum up, Travelling in with a group are sometimes good, sometimes bad. I think people must travel in with a group but I think people must travel alone.

Essay 10

Some people like travelling in a group with a tourist guide. However, some others claim that it causes some problems. What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling with a companion? Discuss both sides in between 180-220 words.

Travelling to somewhere is everytime must be good. I don't think it changes from person to person because everybody likes travelling, but travelling with a group of people can be different. There are some advantages and disadvantages travelling a group of people. Let us discuss negative and positive situations.

On the one hand travelling with a group has many advantages The first advantage is that when you are sightseeing somewhere you aren't bored. For example you can talk with your group friends about the places. The second advantage is, if you have a tourist guide he or she can tell you what do you want to know. For instance when you are travelling to 'Efes' the tourist guide can tell the history about the 'Efes'.

On the other hand travelling with a group people has many disadvantages, because travelling with a group can be bored and difficult. You have to go where they want to go. For example you don't want to see a place but if you're together with a group you have to. Second disadvantage is that travelling with a group of people can be more expensive. For instance you can eat whatever you want but there is a programme and you have to attend that programme.

Travelling with a group sometimes can be good, sometimes can be bored. That changes from person to person. If you want to know everything about place you must go with a group or with a tourist guide, but if you don't like travelling with people, be alone and when you're travelling feel relaxed.

APPENDIX B

Judging Error Gravity

Please list the errors in the text from the most serious to less serious ones.

Essay ____ :

1- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

2- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

3- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

4- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

5- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

6- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

7- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

8- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

9- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

10- _____

Category: _____ (line: __)

APPENDIX C

Dear colleague,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out L2 writing teachers' perceptions of the importance of different errors made by *UPPER INTERMEDIATE* students in their essays and their preferences regarding the techniques they use to give feedback. The information collected through this questionnaire will be used only for research purposes.

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire.

Selcen Dokuzoğlu

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender: F M
4. Please indicate the program(s), you graduated from/ are enrolled in and write the name(s) of the university/universities.
 - 4.1 BA: ELT ELIT Linguistics Other _____ (specify)
University: _____
 - 4.2 MA/MS: ELT ELIT Linguistics Other _____ (specify)
University: _____ Completed In progress
 - 4.3 PhD: ELT ELIT Linguistics Other _____ (specify)
University: _____ Completed In progress
5. Years of experience as an English teacher: 1-4 5-10 11-15 16 or more
6. Years of experience in teaching writing: 1-4 5-10 11-15 16 or more

PART II: ERROR SERIOUSNESS

Please read the error types given below and circle the answers that most closely reflect your opinion on how serious each of the errors given below is.

| A: Verb Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Wrong verb tense (wrong tense is chosen) e.g.: I <u>have read</u> this book last week. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Wrong verb form (correct tense is chosen but the verb is used in a wrong form) e.g.: Don't <u>eating</u> too much. When I was a child, I <u>was watched</u> a lot of cartoons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Subject/ verb disagreement e.g.: My mother <u>cook</u> well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| B: Noun Ending Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|--|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Singular/plural errors e.g.: I play tennis every <u>weekends</u> . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Wrong possessive ending e.g.: <u>Ayse's</u> has got a lot of money. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| C: Article Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|--|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Missing article e.g.: My mother is () good teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Unnecessary article e.g.: Travelling in a group with a tourist guide is <u>an</u> enjoyable for people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Wrong article use e.g.: You should buy <u>a</u> elegant dress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| D: Wrong Word Choices | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Wrong preposition choice e.g.: I stayed there <u>during</u> 16 months. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Wrong vocabulary choice e.g.: They <u>picked</u> us to the museum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Wrong word form e.g.: He is very <u>kindly</u> . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| E: Sentence Structural Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|--|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Wrong word order e.g.: What kinds of rules we must obey? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Incomplete sentence (i.e., wrong use of dependent clauses, lack of subject, lack of verb, lack of relative pronoun, lack of object, missing preposition, lack of content words) e.g.: I would tell you. If I knew her secret. Young people should be aware of difficulties ____ (of living alone). I live () the city. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Unnecessary word/phrase (i.e., double verb, extra content word, unnecessary relative pronoun, extra preposition) e.g.: Old people should go abroad to feel <u>themselves</u> good. If a person goes <u>to</u> abroad, he can learn new cultures. Unfortunately, we cannot stay <u>to be</u> calm in our daily life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| F: Spelling Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|--|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Spelling error resulting in another English word e.g.: I haven't <u>heart</u> of him recently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Spelling error(s) not resulting in another English word e.g.: She is a very <u>beatiful</u> girl. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| G: Punctuation Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. Incorrect punctuation e.g.: Moreover ; he has to pay for the house rental. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Omission of punctuation e.g.: For example (,) a lot of people have made.. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Unnecessary punctuation e.g.: There are some kinds of teaching programs on TV, such as;_cooking... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Capitalization error e.g.: To sum up, <u>T</u> ravelling in a group is usually enjoyable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| H: Content Related Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. No thesis statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Poor thesis statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Poor argument | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Arguments not well supported (lack of details & examples) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Irrelevant statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Lack of clarity of ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Repetition of ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Failure to balance parts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| I: Organizational Errors | Not important at all | | | | Very important |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1. No title | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Ineffective introduction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Lack of unity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Lack of transition words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Wrong use of transition words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Lack of connectives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Wrong use of connectives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Ineffective conclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PART III- ERROR FEEDBACK

A: Which of the statements below best describe your PREFERRED error feedback practice in writing? Please put a tick next to your choice and write your reasons.

WHY? (In making your comment, you can consider factors like time/effort/benefit etc.)

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1-I DON'T MARK students' errors in writing. | | |
| 2-I mark ALL THE ERRORS of students. | | |
| 3-I mark students' errors SELECTIVELY. | | |

If you have marked statement 3 above, please answer the items in section B. If not, go to part C.

B: Which of the following best describe(s) the major principle for error selection? Please put a tick next to your choice(s).

| | |
|---|--|
| 1- The selected errors are directly linked to grammar instruction in class e.g.: after students have been taught articles, I provide feedback on articles. | |
| 2- The selected errors are related to students' specific needs e.g.: knowing that students are particularly weak in articles, I provide feedback on article errors. | |
| 3- I decide what errors to provide feedback while I am marking students' essays | |
| 4- Other (please specify) | |

C: Rate the frequency with which you WOULD use each of the following error feedback techniques according to the scale below.

(Please indicate your PREFERENCE, not what you are already doing because of institutional rules)

1-Never 2- Rarely 3-Sometimes 4- Often 5- Always

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and correct them e.g: He has <u>went</u> home. <i>He has gone home.</i> | | | | | |
| 2- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them with the help of a marking code e.g: He has <u>went</u> home. Verb form / wf He has gone home. | | | | | |
| 3- I indicate (underline/circle) errors, but I don't correct them e.g: He has <u>went</u> home. | | | | | |
| 4- I indicate (underline/circle) errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code), but I don't correct them e.g: He has <u>went</u> home. verb form/wf | | | | | |
| 5- I hint at the location of errors e.g.: by putting a mark in the margin to indicate an error on a specific line ➤ He has went home. | | | | | |
| 6- I hint at the location of errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code) e.g.: by writing 'prep' in the margin to indicate a preposition error on a specific line. ➤ prep He has gone to home. | | | | | |
| 7-I indicate (underline/circle) errors, and write comments about them. e.g.: by reminding a rule or asking questions about the error. He <u>just has</u> gone home. We use just and already after the helping verb. | | | | | |

APPENDIX D

An example of the recordings of essay marking

Essay 6: first step to life ismini taşıyor essay. Aslında başlığı da 3. veya 2. hataya konulabilirdi, çünkü “first step to life” nosyonu yok bu paragrafta, 1 the most important thing in life1 nosyonu var, first step olmamış, ama 1. 2. sıraya koyduğum yine content oldu. Birinci, en önemli hata introduction. Daha önceki essay’lerdekine benzer hatalar içeriyor. ”Experiences are important in people’s life” cümlesi, experience’lardan bahsedeceğini anlatıyor, bi sonraki cümle de öyle, ama topic sentence gibi kullanılan cümle “young people should go abroa” yani experiences’ ı yurtdışına gitmeye indirgemiş. Genelden özele inmede bir level kaybı var, çok genelden başlayıp, çok özelle introyu bitiriyorlar, hiç hoş olmuyor. Onun dışında yine content’le ilgili çok gözebatan bir sorun 9. satırdaki ‘you can work as as tourist guide’, şeyi geçelim, bu paragrafın conclusion olması gerekiyor, tamam, ama hadi ondan da önemlisi, “if you learn different languages very well, you can work as a tourist guide”, burada da şey, hatalı bir indirgeme var, örnek olarak vermiş ama bir örnek vermiş, yetersiz bir örnek olmuş, havada kalmış, onu da çok beğenmedim. Bu content sorunlarından sonra vocabulary ile ilgili sorunlar var, mesela ‘status’ kelimesi yanlış kullanılmış, ‘social status’ olarak kullanılmak istenmiş ama ‘status ‘ yanlış kullanılmış, yine bir klasik verb collocation hatası. Bu da önemli. Onun dışında 6. satırda “you earn money.” 1. paragrafın - her ne kadar paragraf diyemesek de çünkü 2 cümle kendisi -, “you can earn money” cümlesiyle bitmesi, çok vague olmuş, çok havada kalmış, vocabulary demişim

ama bu bir organizasyon hatası aslında. Onun dışında, gramerde de bence paragrafin content hatalarından daha az önemli ama yine de önemli. Bunları 3 gruba ayırdım ama daha fazla da olabilir tekrar okunursa. “You become”, “they undestand” , “you become”, burada bir modification hatası var, buralarda modal kullanılması gerekirken kullanılmamış, ve çok genel anlamlar ortaya çıkmış. “You can become”, “they may understand” gibi cümleyi modify edecek, anlamı daha soften edecek kelimeler, modallar kullanılmamış. Bir de çok önemli değil ama 10. satırda “status’ll” gibi “status” tan sonra apostrophe will kullanmış ve bu da enteresan olmuş.

APPENDIX E

| Error types | Number of markings (Total: 786) |
|--|------------------------------------|
| A: Verb Errors | 112 |
| 1. Wrong verb tense | 35 |
| 2. Wrong verb form | 51 |
| 3. Subject/ verb disagreement | 26 |
| B: Noun Ending Errors | 37 |
| 1. Singular/plural errors | 37 |
| 2. Wrong possessive ending | - |
| C: Article Errors | 12 |
| 1. Missing article | 8 |
| 2. Unnecessary article | 3 |
| 3. Wrong article use | 1 |
| D: Wrong Word Choices | 141 |
| 1. Wrong preposition choice | 12 |
| 2. Wrong vocabulary choice | 109 |
| 3. Wrong word form | 20 |
| E: Sentence Structural Errors | 90 |
| 1. Wrong word order | 20 |
| 2. Incomplete sentence | 63 |
| 3. Unnecessary word/phrase | 17 |
| F: Spelling Errors | 11 |
| 1. Spelling error resulting in another English word | 2 |
| 2. Spelling error(s) not resulting in another English word | 9 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| G:Punctuation Errors | 46 |
| 1.Incorrect punctuation | 7 |
| 2. Omission of punctuation | 25 |
| 3.Unnecessary punctuation | 2 |
| 4.Capitalization error | 12 |
| H: Content Related Errors | 239 |
| 1.No thesis statement | 8 |
| 2.Poor thesis statement | 20 |
| 3.Poor argument | 27 |
| 4.Arguments not well supported (Lack of details & examples) | 53 |
| 5.Irrelevant statements | 42 |
| 6.Lack of clarity of ideas | 84 |
| 7.Repetition of ideas | 4 |
| 8.Failure to balance parts | 1 |
| I: Organizational Errors | 98 |
| 1.No title | 5 |
| 2.Ineffective introduction | 25 |
| 3. Lack of unity | 13 |
| 4.Lack of transition words | 13 |
| 5.Wrong use of transition words | 16 |
| 6.Lack of connectives | 1 |
| 7.Wrong use of connectives | 4 |
| 8.Ineffective conclusion | 21 |