A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY
OF
BILKENT UNIVERSITY FIRST YEAR STUDENTS’ RESPONSE TO WRITTEN TEACHER FEEDBACK

A THESIS PRESENTED BY
FELİN ALTAN
TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BILKENT UNIVERSITY
JULY 1998
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ABSTRACT

Title: A descriptive study of Bilkent University first year students' response to written teacher feedback
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Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program

This research study investigated what Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback; and what Bilkent University first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive.

One hundred and sixty Bilkent first year students participated in the study. Data were collected through a student questionnaire and interviews. Closed items in the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. For the analysis of open ended questionnaire and interview items, descriptive categories were developed.

The study focused on three questions. The first research question investigated what Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback. The results suggest that the written teacher feedback Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides is presented in all forms, although it is mostly in the forms of single words, phrases and complete sentences rather than in the form of symbols. The students receive most comments and corrections on content and followed (in this order) by organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. However, teacher comments and corrections on organization seem to be more appreciated by the students, except Engineering students who appreciate surface level comments more than any other type of comments and corrections. The students also report that they receive positive
comments on their content and organization, and they report that this is very motivating.

The second research question focused on what Bilkent university first year students do with the written teacher feedback they receive. Most of the students report they reread all of their papers, however, they do not think about all of the comments and corrections they receive, but most of their teachers’ comments and corrections. Most of the students report that they usually look over corrections, keep the points their teachers make in mind, check dictionary and try to make corrections themselves. They rarely misunderstand their teacher feedback on content and organization especially when they are too general. Some other students also note specific problems with reading their teachers’ handwriting, with understanding their teacher’s word choice, and with figuring out what specific symbols mean. In such a case, they report they mostly ask their teacher for help. They rarely disagree with the comments and corrections on content and organization. In such a case, they report that they usually discuss the issue with the teacher in class and/or break time. Most of them note that they do not make appointment with their teachers for further discussion and explanation.

The third research question investigated what Bilkent University first year students think of the written teacher feedback they receive. Almost all students feel that their teachers’ feedback indeed helps them improve their writing skills because by their teachers’ comments and corrections they become aware of their mistakes and know what to improve or avoid in the future. The students seem to respect their teachers’ opinions and appreciate their efforts and attention.
The study also suggests a few important pedagogical implications about the procedures - tutorials, revision and feedback - which the Unit employs, and about the training of Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors for the subject matters which their students study and write about.
The examining committee appointed by the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
for the thesis examination of the MA TEFL student

Pelin Altan

has read the thesis of the student.

The committee has decided that the thesis of the student is satisfactory.

Thesis Title : A Descriptive Study Of Bilkent University First Year Students’ Response To Written Teacher Feedback

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Responding to student writing has been one of the most important roles of writing teachers in writing instruction since it is assumed that it plays a critical role in improving student writing. However, the studies conducted in the related area suggest rather conflicting results about its role and effect on improving student writing.

Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) reviewed research testing numerous hypotheses on better ways for teachers to respond to student writing. They cited studies contrasting responses of praise with responses of criticism; contrasting the effect of oral responses with that of written responses; contrasting end commentary with marginal comments; contrasting correction of errors with naming errors and with offering rules; contrasting explicit suggestions for change with implicit suggestions for change. In each case, the researchers were forced to the conclusion that none of these different ways of responding to student writing produced significant improvements in students' subsequent writing.

Although Knoblauch and Brannon's (1981) study noted a negative result, other research studies in the related area found that students' revisions improved in overall quality and in linguistic accuracy when they received comments and/or corrections on both the content and form of their essays (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997); and that comments on intermediate drafts which are subsequently revised lead to student improvement in writing more than feedback on final drafts (Chaudron, 1983; Ferris, 1995; Freedman, 1987; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Krashen, 1984; Zang, 1985; Zang & Halpern, 1988; Ziv, 1984).
Despite the fact that the results of the research studies examining the role and effect of teacher feedback on student writing are elusive and inconclusive, teachers continue to write comments on students' papers because they sense that their comments help their students improve their writing (Leki, 1990); and they themselves feel that such response is a critical part of their job as writing instructors despite the great amount of time and effort they spend in providing written and/or oral feedback to their students (Ferris, 1995). Moreover, students expect and value their teachers' feedback on their writing; and they believe that their teachers' feedback helps them improve their writing; and they appreciate their teachers' efforts (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; McCurdy, 1992; Zang, 1995).

**Background of the Study**

As a writing instructor in the Bilkent Freshman English Unit, the Faculty of Humanities and Letters, I teach ENG 101 and 102, first-year English and Composition courses, in which students are required to write argumentative essays, conduct research in an interest area, and to report their research findings in both written and oral forms. These courses require continuous teacher feedback. As a unit we are well aware of the fact that teacher feedback is a crucial factor in students' writing. My colleagues and I have asked ourselves many times which are the most effective ways of responding to students' writing. As a unit, we have acquired some insights into the most effective responses to our students' writing both through our own experiences and through related research studies conducted in the area.

However, we have not made any investigation into what teachers provide as feedback and what students do with and think of the feedback they receive. As writing teachers,
somehow we assume that the feedback we give is absorbed by our students and whatever feedback we provide works for them. However, this might not be the case and we might need to make some modifications in the feedback procedures we employ in our unit.

To gain more information and understanding of this issue, I examined the literature, searching for the studies in the field that I have been interested in, e.g., what students do with and think of the feedback they receive. Although research into feedback on compositions has been mainly concerned with the most effective ways of teacher response to student writing rather than with the issue of what students do with and think of the feedback they receive, I have also found some studies which identify students' responses to written teacher feedback (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; McCurdy, 1992).

As Cohen’s (1987), Cohen and Cavalcanti’s (1990), McCurdy’s (1992); and Ferris’ (1995) studies focus on the investigation of what teachers provide as feedback and what students do with and think of the feedback, my study also concentrates on the same issue. It investigates what Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback and what Bilkent first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive.

**Purpose of the study**

I conduct my study in order to provide my unit with information about what written teacher feedback procedures are employed in Bilkent Freshman English Unit and what our students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive.
It focuses on evaluating the feedback procedures which my unit employs. Therefore, the results may suggest possible modifications in our feedback procedures.

**Significance of the Study**

In addition to what the study may suggest about the feedback procedures which my unit employs, it may provide other writing teachers with further insights into the attitudes students have toward written teacher feedback, and into the steps students go through when processing the teacher feedback they receive. Therefore, writing teachers may benefit from the results which my study may suggest, and modify their own feedback procedures accordingly.

**Research Questions**

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What does Bilkent Freshman English Unit provide as written teacher feedback, as perceived by Bilkent first year students?
2. What do Bilkent first year students do with the written teacher feedback they receive?
3. What do Bilkent first year students think of the written teacher feedback they receive?
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The role of teacher response to student writing in writing instruction has gained increased attention over the years. As noted in Ferris' (1995) study:

Teachers have explored various ways to provide effective feedback in order to help students improve their writing, and the techniques used to provide feedback to student writing have included peer response groups, teacher-student conferences, audiotaped commentary, computer based commentary on students' diskettes or via e-mail (p.35).

However, for many teachers, handwritten commentary on student draft(s) is the primary response method (Ferris, 1995). We, as writing teachers, spend much of our time writing comments and suggestions; and ask our students to incorporate them into their papers to improve their writing. We assume that what we suggest to them is absorbed and what we provide works for them, that is, improves their subsequent writing.

When I examined the professional literature I found that most of the studies in the area deal with the nature of written teacher feedback because it is considered to have the most important effect on student writing, since what teachers provide their students with will shape their revisions. Other studies focus on students' reactions and preferences regarding the written teacher feedback they receive, which may provide important information to evaluate the feedback procedures employed and which may also lead to possible modifications in them.
Similarly, in this chapter, the first part deals with the nature of the feedback teachers provide, and the second part deals with students' reactions and preferences regarding written teacher feedback.

**Nature of written teacher feedback**

This part reviews the studies which identify what writing teachers focus on when commenting and correcting student writing; and how they employ their comments and corrections. However, the studies dealing with the nature of written teacher feedback are inconclusive. While some of them indicate that written teacher feedback has little impact on subsequent student writing, other studies note opposite results.

Knoblauch and Brannon (1981), as indicated in the previous chapter, cite studies contrasting different teacher response types, e.g., praise with responses of criticism; oral responses with written responses; end commentary with side comments; correction of errors with naming errors and with offering rules; explicit suggestions for change with implicit suggestions for change. They conclude that none of these different ways of responding to student writing has an impact on the improvement of subsequent student writing. Other studies also indicate the same result. Cohen (1987) claims that “the activity of teacher feedback as currently constituted and realized may have a more limited impact on learners than teachers would desire”.

However, the studies mentioned above fail to consider the role of feedback *quality*. As noted in the following studies, written teacher feedback focuses on certain elements in written output, usually on surface level; and it is unclear, inaccurate and unbalanced; and it overemphasizes negative points, thus it is mostly discouraging; and
it is often not structured enough to help writers to develop their ideas. Therefore, the results in the previous studies should be questioned and approached with caution.

Zamel (1985) investigates teacher responses to student writing. She examines comments, reactions and markings which appeared on compositions to find out responding behavior of teachers, and concludes that:

ESL writing teachers misread student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to text as final product and rarely make content specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text (p. 92).

Zamel also reveals that annotations of ESL writing teachers are apparently intended to catch every error the students make, and that despite that intention, the teachers miss errors; that sometimes minor errors corrected and much more significant problems causing serious ambiguity in meaning go uncorrected. Zamel concludes that this type of marking is not helpful to student writers. This is closely related to what Sommers (1982) finds in her study. She notes that “text may be misread, comments and reactions may be inaccurate, misleading or inappropriate”.

It is also noted that teachers tend to comment more on surface level of writing when compared to the meaning and the content (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990). In Ferris’ (1995) and McCurdy’s (1992) studies, students report that they receive the most comments on grammar, followed by (in this order) organization, content, mechanics (spelling, punctuation and capitalization) and vocabulary. Cohen’s (1987) study reveals that teachers’ comments deal with grammar
and mechanics; and that teachers devote much less attention to vocabulary, organization, and content. Zamel (1985) also notes that the content of writing is ignored and concludes that this type of feedback does not improve student writing. Chapin and Terdal (1990) and Gök (1991) find that the majority of teachers’ comments are on form rather than content or organization and the teachers’ direct corrections of student errors form half of the comments. Most of the students’ changes are made as a result of these comments on form. The top ranking for grammar is consistent in all studies, and besides, as it is seen what teacher provides as response shapes student revisions. Thus, the failure of poor student revisions might due to the fact that teacher feedback focuses on form only. However, as indicated in other studies, students’ revisions are improved in overall quality and in linguistic accuracy when students receive comments and/or correction on both the content and form of their essays (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997).

In addition, research in L1 and L2 student writing suggest that teacher response to student compositions is most effective when it is given on preliminary rather than final drafts of student essays (Freedman, 1987; Krashen, 1984); and comments on intermediate drafts which are to be subsequently revised are more useful in facilitating student improvement than feedback on final drafts (Chaudron, 1983; Ferris, 1995; Hillocks, 1986; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Zang, 1985; Zang & Halpern, 1988). Ziv’s article (1984) and Hedgecock & Lefkowitz’s (1994) study also show that when a teacher intervenes as the student is writing and revising, the final product shows improvement over the intermediate drafts. Because students must rethink and revise previously written essay drafts, they are more likely to pay close attention to their teachers’ advice on how to do so than in a situation in which they
receive a paper with comments and corrections to apply to a completely new essay assignment. Thus, it seems that teacher written response works best when students are required to revise several drafts of the same paper and when they receive continuous teacher feedback on each of the drafts revised.

Research on the process approach also shows that positive responses by EFL teachers to student compositions are essential in improving students’ writing skill (Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Diederich, 1963, 1974; Hirsch, 1977; Raimes, 1983). With regard to positive reinforcement, Ferris’ (1995) and Uzel’s (1995) studies suggest that teachers should put constructive criticism side by side with positive comments as some students in the studies report that their teachers’ comments are all negative and that this fact depresses them and decrease their motivation and self-esteem. Similarly, Daiker (1990) notes that praise may be especially important for students who have known little encouragement and, in part for that reason, suffer from writing apprehension. The same study also demonstrates that praise improves student writing, increases the length of student papers, and affects student attitude about writing. However, most of the college composition teachers focus on what students have done wrong or/and are weak in rather than what they have done well (Daiker, 1983; Dragga, 1986).

Other studies state that to correct all the errors, using the traditional approach, is time-consuming for the teacher and discouraging for the student. Byrne (1988) notes that there is some doubt about how effective this form of correction is since students learn nothing from it. Valette (1973) and Burt & Kiparsky (1974) claim that correcting too many errors destroys the motivation of the student and it may also lead to spending a lot of time on superficial errors rather than more serious ones. As it
seems both unwise and impractical to correct every mistake, it is stated that teachers must be selective (Walz, 1982). Being selective, the teacher does not attempt to correct all the mistakes in student writing, but only those in certain areas where the students need help. This approach is more positive than total correction and possibly one of the requirements for better student revisions, and thus for better student writing as Byrne’s (1988) study notes.

**Students’ reactions and preferences**

This part reviews the studies which focus on what students do with and think of the feedback they receive; and what they report they prefer to receive.

In most studies, students report that they receive feedback mostly on surface level errors. Leki’s study (1986) reveals that students express a lack of interest in teacher reaction to the content of their papers. Students report that such commentary does not help their writing improve, whereas directives on development and organization and indications of errors help their writing, as Fathman & Whalley’s (1990) study also indicates. Another study of Leki (1991) reveals that students would like to see all their errors corrected and they always look for corrections of their grammatical errors. Students do not approve of teacher comments which deal with only organization and content. Although Leki’s (1991) study reports that the students generally prefer extensive comments on grammar rather than content, a more recent study by Hedgcock & Kefkowitz (1994) reports a more complex finding: EFL students pay more attention to form, whereas ESL students are as interested in teacher feedback on content as they are in sentence-level comments and corrections. The authors suggest that this result may be due to the fact that whereas EFL students
use L2 writing as a form of language practice, ESL students must use their writing skills beyond the language classroom.

In other studies, students report that they pay attention to teachers' comments on both mechanics and grammar, but they also pay attention to comments regarding vocabulary, organization and content-areas in which teachers' comments were fewer (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1997; Uzel, 1995). In Ferris' (1995) study, although students report receiving more and paying the most attention to teacher feedback on grammar than any other aspects of their papers, they also indicate that they receive comments on the content and organization of their essay; and that they take such feedback very seriously.

In addition to what teacher feedback type students prefer and pay attention to in their papers, some other studies indicate what students feel and think of the teacher feedback they receive. Unfortunately, most of written teacher feedback are found to be unclear and imprecise (Zamel, 1985). The marks and responses are often confusing and unintelligible to the students. Most of the students do not understand teachers' comments when they are single words or short phrases such as "confusing", "not clear", "too general" and "too specific". Some students also mention that they have problems with both specific grammar terms and symbols used to indicate a grammatical error-abbreviations, arrows and circles (Cohen, 1987; Ferris 1995; Ferris, 1997; Gök, 1991; Uzel, 1995; Ziv, 1984). In such a case, students report that they usually seek help from outside sources, mostly ask their teachers and friends for help (Ferris, 1995). Some researchers suggest that students can learn more to understand teacher's responses. McCurdy (1992) suggests a training program in
learning strategies in order to more effectively use feedback. Ferris (1995) and Zamel (1985) note that teachers should explain their responding behaviors to their students.

Although previous studies indicate rather negative results Cohen & Cavalcanti's (1990) and McCurdy's (1992) studies report more positive results. The students are, in general, happy with the feedback they receive, claim that they pay attention to it and find it helpful. Most of the students reread all or most of their papers, and read and attend to all or most of their teachers' comments. They, in general, take their teachers' feedback quite seriously and pay a lot of attention to it. Also, Ferris' (1995) study indicates similar results for multiple draft settings and reports that students are more likely to reread their essays and pay close attention to their teachers' comments on earlier drafts than on the final draft. Students appear to take their own work and their teachers' feedback quite seriously and they have interest in knowing how their efforts are received by their teachers.

In the studies examined above, students generally report encouraging results, that they expect and value their teachers' feedback on their writing, and feel that their teachers' feedback help them to improve their writing.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the study

The major focus of this study is to identify what Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback and what Bilkent first year students do with and think of the feedback they receive. The study was conducted at Bilkent University and the subjects were selected from Bilkent University first year students enrolled in ENG 101, 102 and 104 English and Composition courses in 1997-1998 Spring semester. In this chapter, the subjects involved in the study, the instruments used to collect data and the procedures employed are discussed in detail.

Subjects

The subjects involved in the study were enrolled in various sections of three separate courses, ENG 101, 102 and 104, first year English and Composition courses which Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides for three departments, AMER (Department of American Language and Literature), ELIT (Department of English Language and Literature), Economics; and for two faculties, Faculty of Engineering, FADA (Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture). In these courses, the students are required to write essays, to submit a written term paper through research and to report their findings in oral as well as in written form.

The total number of students enrolled in ENG 101, 102 and 104 for 1997-1998 Spring semester was 964. As indicated in Table 1, the number of students enrolled in ENG 101 was 25 in Economics, 23 in Engineering, and 36 in FADA. The number of students enrolled in ENG 102 is 162 in Economics, 213 in Engineering,
and 257 in FADA. The number of students enrolled in ENG 104, was 146 in ELIT and 102 in AMER departments.

Table 1

1997-1998 Spring Semester English Unit Number of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>101</th>
<th>102</th>
<th>104</th>
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<td>FADA</td>
<td>ENGINEERING</td>
<td>ECON</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>162</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since the number of students in each of the groups at the university was not the same, in order to eliminate the risk of the domination of a particular group, equal number of students from each group was determined. Thus, for ENG 101, 102 and 104, 20 students from each group were selected, so 160 students out of 964 enrolled in ENG 101, 102 and 104 involved in the study as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Total Number of Students Involved in the Study

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<th>101</th>
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<th>104</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FADA</td>
<td>ENGINEERING</td>
<td>ECON</td>
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The subjects were referred to as first year students as the title indicates; however, some subjects involved in the study were second, third, fourth and even fifth year students - they are referred to as repeat students - taking first year English and composition courses as Table 3 indicates:

Table 3

<table>
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<th>Number of Students According to Their Year in Department</th>
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<td><strong>Year in the Department</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First year students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth year students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students involved in the study were either those who had studied at least one semester at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL), the preparatory English program at the university, or those who had passed the test and therefore who had not studied at BUSEL. Namely, the subjects were either BUSEL or direct entries as indicated in Table 4. However, these two groups of students were supposed to have similar language proficiency in English since they had passed the same test - COPE - before they could study their subject matters in departments.
Table 4

Number of BUSEL and Direct Entries Involved in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSEL entry</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>(74.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct entry</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>(25.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the individual interviews, I asked 23 students who had raised interesting points in the answers they had given in the questionnaire. Eleven of them agreed to participate in the interviews.

Materials

Data was collected mainly through the modified version of the questionnaire which had been used in Cohen’s (1987) study for single draft settings and in Ferris’ (1995) study for multiple draft settings. In addition to the questionnaire, individual interviews with students who had answered the questionnaire were conducted.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts and of 18 questions which were both open and close ended. The first part included questions about students’ educational background, i.e., their departments, the course they were taking and whether they had studied at BUSEL. In the second part, the questions intended to identify what Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback and what Bilkent University first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive.

Interviews were held for two main reasons. One was in order to verify the previous questionnaire results; and the other was in order to gain more insights into
the specific points which students had raised when answering the questionnaire. The
interviews consisted of open-ended questions. They were held in Turkish for the
purpose of gaining as much information as possible; and they were audiotaped.

Procedure

I began the study by asking Bryan Gilroy, Head of Freshman English Unit for
formal permission to conduct the study in the Bilkent Freshman English Unit. Upon
receiving permission, I piloted my questionnaire, and according to the results of the
piloting, I rephrased the items which led to confusion.

The next step was to ask Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors if the
questionnaire could be given to the students in particular sections and at particular
class time. After specific time and sections were scheduled with the instructors, the
questionnaires were given in class time. The response rate for the questionnaire was
100%.

The interviews were held individually. They were conducted in Turkish for the
purpose of gaining as much information as possible. All interviews were audiotaped.
Total number of students who participated in the interviews was 11 although 23
students were asked to participate. Thus, the response rate for the interviews was
48%.

The quantitative items on the questionnaire were tallied and summed so that
they could be analyzed through frequencies and percentages. For the analysis of open-
ended items in the questionnaire and in the interviews descriptive categories were
developed.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Overview of the Study

The major focus of this study is to identify what Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback; and what Bilkent first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive. In order to achieve this purpose, the study focused on three questions of what teacher written feedback tends to cover and in what forms it is presented at Bilkent Freshman English Unit; what Bilkent first year students do with the written teacher feedback they receive, and what Bilkent first year students think of the written teacher feedback they receive.

In this chapter, the subjects involved in the study, the data collection and data analysis procedures are summarised; and then the results of the study are presented and the possible reasons are discussed.

Subjects

The subjects involved in the study were, as the title indicates, Bilkent first year students enrolled in various sections of three separate courses - ENG 101, 102 and 104, first year English and composition courses which Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides. The students who answered the questionnaire were selected from three departments - AMER (American Language and Literature), ELIT (English Language and Literature), and Economics; and from two faculties - Faculty of Engineering and FADA (Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture). Thus, 160 students (out of total number of 964 students) enrolling in Eng 101, 102 and 104 in three departments and two faculties involved in the study.
Although most of the students were first year students, there were some small number of second, third, fourth, and even fifth year students taking the first year English and composition courses. The students involved in the study were either BUSEL or direct entries who had similar language proficiency in English. These two groups of students represented 16 different teachers and 16 separate sections—six of ENG 101, six of ENG 102, and four of ENG 104.

**Materials**

Data were collected by means of a student questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts and of 18 open and close ended questions. The first part included the questions about students’ educational background. The questions in the second part intended to identify what written teacher feedback tends to cover and in what forms it is presented in Bilkent Freshman English Unit, and what Bilkent first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive.

The questionnaires were given in class; and all the questionnaires were completed and returned, of which 60 were completed by ENG 101 students, 60 by ENG 102 and 40 by ENG 104 students. Thus, the response rate for student questionnaires was 100%.

In addition to the student questionnaire, individual interviews were conducted. For this purpose, 23 students who had answered the questionnaire beforehand were asked whether they would like to participate in the interviews. However, only 11 students agreed to participate. The response rate for the interviews was 48%.

The purpose of the interviews was to verify the previous questionnaire results, and at the same time to gain more insights into the specific points the students raised
when answering the questions in the questionnaire. The interviews were held in Turkish for the purpose of gaining as much information as possible. They were all audiotaped.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The quantitative items on the questionnaire were tallied and summed so that data could be analyzed through frequencies and percentages.

The open ended items in the questionnaire and in the interviews were analyzed through descriptive categories developed.

**Results**

**In What Forms Did Students Report Receiving Written Teacher Feedback?**

Question 4 assessed the students' perceptions of the form and amount of their teachers' feedback.

Table 5 (Question 4)

**Forms Of Written Teacher Feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symbols</td>
<td>36 (22.5%)</td>
<td>60 (37.5%)</td>
<td>53 (31.1%)</td>
<td>11 (6.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single words</td>
<td>40 (25%)</td>
<td>64 (40%)</td>
<td>48 (30%)</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrases</td>
<td>36 (22.5%)</td>
<td>76 (47.5%)</td>
<td>33 (20.6%)</td>
<td>15 (9.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complete sentences</td>
<td>57 (35.6%)</td>
<td>67 (41.9%)</td>
<td>27 (16.9%)</td>
<td>9 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students reported that they received the comments and corrections in all forms. However, they seemed to receive more comments and corrections in the forms of single word ("clear" etc.), phrase ("too general" etc.) and complete sentence
("expand this part a bit further" etc.) rather than in the form of symbol (arrows, abbreviations etc.).

Although this information gives a picture about the forms of written teacher feedback that Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides, it is rather department specific. While the students at Economics, AMER (American Language and Literature), ELIT (English Language and Literature) and Engineering reported that their teachers gave more feedback in the forms of single words, phrases and complete sentences rather than symbols, the students at FADA reported that their teachers usually gave more feedback in the forms of symbols and single words. Thus, it seems that the teachers at each department employ their own specific feedback procedures.

What Types Of Feedback Did Students Report Receiving?

Question 5 focused on what written teacher feedback tended to cover, and asked students what they usually had their teachers' comments and corrections on.

Table 6 (Question 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types Of Written Teacher Feedback</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>71 (44.3%)</td>
<td>51 (31.9%)</td>
<td>26 (16.3%)</td>
<td>12 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>70 (43.7%)</td>
<td>43 (26.9%)</td>
<td>27 (16.9%)</td>
<td>20 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>62 (38.7%)</td>
<td>59 (36.9%)</td>
<td>25 (15.6%)</td>
<td>14 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>61 (38.1%)</td>
<td>55 (34.4%)</td>
<td>36 (22.5%)</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>38 (23.8%)</td>
<td>54 (33.8%)</td>
<td>58 (36.2%)</td>
<td>10 (6.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table 6, the students felt that they received the most comments and corrections on content and followed (in this order) by organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics.

However, this information gathered through question 5 is department specific. Although feedback on content and organization seemed to have priority for Engineering and FADA students, it did not have the same priority for ELIT, AMER and Economics students. When the students at AMER and ELIT reported that they received most written teacher feedback on their vocabulary followed by content, grammar, organization and mechanics; the students at Economics reported that they received most of their teachers’ comments and corrections on their organization followed by vocabulary, grammar, content and mechanics respectively.

It seems, once again, that Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors providing first year English and composition courses for these five groups have their own specific feedback procedures since the information students reported differs at different departments. This may be due to the fact that Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors may perceive that students at specific departments may lack specific features in their papers; and therefore they may want to meet this need by providing more feedback on these specific features which they perceive that their students lack.

As another alternative, Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors may perceive some specific features as crucial in writing at specific departments. For instance, vocabulary at literature departments- ELIT ans AMER- may be seen crucial and therefore more feedback may be given relatively on this specific feature.
How Much Attention Did Students Report Paying To Each Type Of Feedback?

After reflecting on their teachers’ feedback priorities, the students were asked, in question 8, how much attention they paid to the different types of feedback.

Table 7 (Question 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>89 (55.6%)</td>
<td>51 (31.9%)</td>
<td>13 (8.1%)</td>
<td>7 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>92 (57.5%)</td>
<td>42 (26.2%)</td>
<td>19 (11.9%)</td>
<td>7 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>72 (45%)</td>
<td>66 (41.2%)</td>
<td>20 (12.5%)</td>
<td>2 (1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>82 (51.3%)</td>
<td>57 (35.6%)</td>
<td>20 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>62 (38.8%)</td>
<td>53 (33.1%)</td>
<td>39 (24.4%)</td>
<td>6 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall data indicated that the students paid a lot of attention to organization (57.5%) and followed by content, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics as illustrated in Table 7.

Although the feedback students reported receiving was more on content and organization of their papers, organization seemed to be more important to the students than content. However, the information about this issue is again department specific; and it is as follows:

The students at ELIT and AMER reported that they received more comments and corrections on their vocabulary; however, they paid much more attention to organization. Organization is top in this department.
Table 8 (Question 8)

How Much Attention Students At ELIT-AMER Pay To Each Type Of Teacher

Comment and Correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>26 (65%)</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>30 (75%)</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>26 (65%)</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>25 (62.5%)</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>3 (7.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>17 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students at Economics reported that they paid more attention to content and organization although they received most of the feedback on their organization, vocabulary and grammar. Feedback on content was much more appreciated in this specific department.
Table 9 (Question 8)

How Much Attention Students At Economics Pay To Each Type Of Teacher Comment and Correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>a lot (in %)</th>
<th>some (in %)</th>
<th>little (in %)</th>
<th>none (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>17 (42.5%)</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>21 (52.5%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>21 (52.5%)</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students at FADA seemed to be the most satisfied in terms of the feedback they received. They reported that they received most of the feedback on their content and organization and they paid attention to these two most.

Table 10 (Question 8)

How Much Attention Students At FADA Pay To Each Type Of Teacher Comment and Correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>a lot (in %)</th>
<th>some (in %)</th>
<th>little (in %)</th>
<th>none (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>27 (67.5%)</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>28 (70%)</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>19 (47.5%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>25 (62.5%)</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>19 (47.5%)</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As to the students at Engineering, they stated that they paid much more attention to the feedback on grammar than on content and organization, which they received most comments and corrections on.

Table 11 (Question 8)

How Much Attention Students At Engineering Pay To Each Type Of Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment and Correction</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>21 (52.5%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>25 (62.5%)</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>3 (7.5%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some students from Engineering participated in the interviews stated that their teachers’ corrections on their grammar worked better than any other types of feedback since they could remember this type of feedback more vividly. Some other students noted that their English improved due to their teachers’ corrections on their grammar. In addition, some students noted that they did not pay close attention to their teachers’ comments and corrections on the content of their paper because they believed their teachers were not quite knowledgable in their subject matters, which they mostly wrote about. They stated that they simply disregard their teachers’ comments and corrections on content. As for the comments and corrections on
organization, students reported that they ignored this type of feedback mostly since they did not believe that they should all follow the same pattern of organization that their teacher promoted. Thus, Engineering students seemed to be paying more attention to surface level comments and corrections rather than comments and corrections on content and organization level, although they reported these two were more crucial than any other aspect of writing.

What might be said at this point that Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors perceptions about what students at specific departments need most would be wrong, except for FADA students, if Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors perceive that some specific features are more crucial in writing than any other aspects of writing for the students at specific departments. For instance, if Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors perceived that vocabulary was more crucial for ELIT and AMER students than any other aspects of writing- content, organization, grammar and mechanics-their perceptions about ELIT and AMER students would be wrong since the students at this specific department already reported that they paid more attention to their teachers comments and correction on organization.

Did Students Reread Their Papers And Think About Their Teachers’ Comments And Corrections Carefully?

By questions 6 and 7, students were asked to respond to questions about how much of their papers and their teachers’ comments and corrections they read and think about carefully.
Table 12 (Question 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all of it</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(43.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most of it</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>(36.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some of it</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the students reported they reread all of their papers, however, they
did not think about all of the comments and corrections they received carefully, but
most of their teachers' comments and corrections.

Table 13 (Question 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Of Teacher Comments And Corrections Students Think About Carefully</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all of them</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>(40.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most of them</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some of them</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(18.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. They noted that it was easy to correct their mistakes on grammar, vocabulary and mechanics because their teacher already provided direct correction. The only thing they were supposed to do was just to delete the mistake and insert the correct form that their teachers already provided. They stated that it was, however, harder to attend to the comments and corrections on content and organization since they were more challenging. They noted that it usually required much more effort to figure out what exactly should be done in order to improve their papers in terms of content and organization.

Although students reported they reread all of each composition there are still a large number of students (56.3 %) who did not reread all of their papers and a large number of students (66.5%) who did not think about all of their teachers’ comments and corrections carefully as Table 12 and Table 13 also indicate.

The reason why students did not reread all of their teachers’ comments and corrections carefully might be that students at specific departments were not required to revise their essays strictly. As they were not required to revise, they might not recognize any point in attending to all of their teachers’ comments and corrections and therefore they did not read and think about all of the feedback they received carefully. Similarly, the interviews also indicated the same result. The students who were required to revise appeared to take their own work and their teachers’ feedback quite seriously since they had to make use of the feedback they received in order to improve their papers. For instance, the students at FADA reported that they reread and thought about all of their teachers’ comments and corrections carefully as they were required strictly to revise and improve their papers. Because students must
rethink and revise previously written essay drafts, they are more likely to pay close attention to their teachers' advice on how to do so.

**What Did Students Report Doing In Response To Written Teacher Feedback?**

Question 9 focused on what students did in response to their teachers’ feedback. It basically investigated what students did after they received their papers back with their teachers’ comments and corrections.

Table 14 (Question 9)

**What Students Do In Response To Written Teacher Feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>look over corrections</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make a mental note</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check dictionary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewrite the paper</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figure out corrections</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write down points</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check what other have done</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check grammar book</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss with friends</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss with teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher for help</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask another teacher for help</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.
The students reported that they usually looked over corrections (127 students out of 160), kept the points their teachers made in mind (117 students out of 160), checked a dictionary (70 students out of 160). It seems that they try to make corrections themselves rather than take any further steps to respond to the feedback they received.

Only one third of the students (62 out of 160) reported that they revised their paper. Almost all students participated in the interviews raised the issue that they would not revise their papers if they were not required to, although they also said that they were well aware of the fact that they had to rewrite their papers in order to improve it and to improve their writing skills. Some students also noted that they did not revise their papers since this was a very demanding process and since they had already a very heavy work load in their subject matters at departments.

**Did Students Report Difficulty In Understanding Their Teachers' Written Feedback?**

In question 10, students were asked if they ever had any problems with their teachers' comments and corrections; and if so, they were asked to describe the comments and corrections they did not understand and the strategies they employed in such a case.

**Table 15 (Question 10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(26.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>(48.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(24.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students reported they *rarely* misunderstood their teacher feedback; and the comments and corrections they did not understand were usually the comments and corrections on content and organization, and the comments and corrections when they were too general. In addition, some students (28 out of 160) reported that they had difficulty with figuring out what specific symbols meant.

Table 16 (Question 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type and Form Of Teacher Comments And Corrections Students Do Not Understand</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comments on content</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments that are too general</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symbols</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comment on organization</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handwriting</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on mechanics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on vocabulary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments that are too specific</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on grammar</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbreviations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.
It is surprising that teacher handwriting and word choice received such a high response. Thirty-seven students (out of 160) reported that they had problem with understanding what their teachers asked them to do because of the vocabulary they used when commenting on their compositions and 24 students (out of 160) with reading their teacher’s handwriting.

For instance, some students participated in the interviews noted that they got very confused by the comments and corrections their teachers made. One said “When I get home and when I get this paper to improve, I see a lot of arrows here and there. I try to follow them but I can’t. I try to read the things my teacher wrote on the margins but I can’t. I can’t follow the arrows, I can’t read my teachers’ handwriting. I can’t understand what she/he means by that word. I guess my teacher should fix up the way she gives her comments and corrections before s/he expects me to fix up my paper. Everything on my paper looks so mixed up that after a while I got tired of figuring out what this and that means, and I just leave the paper there”.

When students were asked to describe the strategies they employed in such a case, they reported they mostly ask teacher for help. As the interviews also revealed, students perceived their teachers as the ultimate source of help.
Table 17 (Question 11)

Strategies Students Employ For The Comments And Corrections They Do Not Understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher for help/explanations</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask friends for help</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignore and do nothing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check dictionary/grammar book</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figure out myself first, later ask teacher</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask friends first, later ask teacher</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher, but not satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher in tutorials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do the way teacher asks although not understand the correction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.

Did Students Report They Did Not Agree With Their Teachers’ Written Feedback?

By question 12, students were asked if they had any comments and corrections they did not agree with.
Table 18 (Question 12)

Frequency Of Comments And Corrections Students Do Not Agree With

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>(30.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(43.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(21.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the students (74.3%) reported that they rarely disagreed with their teacher’s comments and corrections. When they had comments and corrections they did not agree with, this was usually the comments and corrections on content and organization, which the students reported that they received most of the comments and corrections on, and which most of the students gave much more importance to than to grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, as previous question results revealed.
Table 19 (Question 12)

**Type and Form Of The Comments And Corrections Students Do Not Agree With**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type and Form</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comments on content</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on organization</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on vocabulary</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on mechanics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on grammar</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.

Some students who participated in the interviews stated that they agreed with their teachers’ comments and corrections on grammar, vocabulary and mechanics as they believed their teachers were expert on language. However, they reported that they might disregard the comments and corrections on content as they believed they were quite knowledgeable in their subject matter which they wrote compositions about mostly, at least more than their writing teacher. As to comments and corrections on organization, they reported that their teachers tended to structure students in terms of the same specific organization pattern, and they believed this was not right. One student said “I may have my own way to convey my message and my friend may have his/her own way. Why does my teacher not respect this? Why do we all have to write in the same way? Why do we have to apply the same organization pattern? I do not believe that it is my paper, it is my teacher’s paper after all. This is very disturbing and demotivating. I guess teacher should not interfere with the way of conveying my
conveying my message”. Another student noted “If you examined the papers in our class you would see that they all sound the same since we all have to follow the same pattern that our teacher aimed at promoting”.

When students were asked to describe the strategies they employed in such a case most of them reported that they usually discussed the issue with the teacher.

Table 20 (Question 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>discuss with the teacher</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignore and do nothing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change the paper in the way teacher asks although not agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss with the teacher, but not satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no time to discuss with the teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.

Although the students reported that they usually discussed the comments and corrections they did not agree with their teacher they also noted that they usually fail to come to an agreement. Most of them said in such a case they simply rewrote their papers as the way their teacher asked them to although they did not agree. They said that they did this for the purpose of getting a good grade.
The students also noted that they preferred to ask for further teacher explanation and for further discussion in class hours or in break time. One might question the quality of the discussion and teacher explanation made in such a short period of time. Despite the fact that they should have made appointment for further explanation and discussion, i.e., make appointment for tutorial, they reported that they did not do so. Even some of the students reported that they did not know what tutorials were for, and therefore they did not use tutorials for further discussion and explanation purpose.

Did Students Report Receiving Any Positive Feedback?

Question 14 asked students whether their teachers gave any positive comments on their papers. Although most of the students (149) answered the question, some of them (11) did not.

Table 21 (Question 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>(33.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(6.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of the question is quite positive. Most of the students (126 students out of 149 students who answered this specific question) reported that they
sometimes and often received positive comments on their compositions although most of them could not give any specific examples. When students received positive comments and corrections they reported that these comments and corrections were usually on content and organization.

One very interesting point was that most of the students reported in the interviews that all teacher comments and corrections were appreciated and considered positive. Most of the students perceived their teachers' efforts as positive whether they were negative or not.

However, several students (7 out of 149) wrote that their teachers' comments were all negative and that this fact depressed them and decreased their motivation and self-esteem.

The most frequently given positive comments, according to what students gave as examples, were as comments on organization, such as "good organization," and on content: "good content," "good point," "good essay," "good example," "good presentation of ideas," "well done," "this is one of the best essays," and "you are doing great".

**Did Students Feel Their Teachers' Feedback Was Helpful?**

Question 15 investigated students' attitudes toward their teachers' comments and corrections and asked if they felt that their teachers' comments and corrections helped them improve their writing skills. Although most of the students (135) answered the question some of them (25) did not.
Table 22 (Question 15)

Students' Attitudes Toward Written Teacher Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(15.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The response to this question was quite positive. As indicated in Table 18, 120 students (out of 135 students who answered this specific question) felt that their teachers' feedback indeed helped them improve their writing skills because it helped them know what to improve or avoid in the future, find their mistakes and clarify their ideas, as Table 23 also indicates.
Table 23 (Question 15)

Reasons Students Feel Teacher Comments And Corrections Help Them Improve Their Writing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I learn what my mistakes are</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can correct my mistakes next time</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher knows better than me so I trust my teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves my organization</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I appreciate what my teacher does for me</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves my content</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves my vocabulary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves my grammar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can develop better ideas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It motivates me to write better essays</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to take them into consideration to have better grades</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 135 and percentages are not calculated.

Overall, the students seemed to respect their teachers' opinions and appreciate their efforts and attention. However, 9 students (out of 135 students who answered this specific question) responded negatively to this question, and 6 students stated that they were not sure whether their teachers' comments and corrections were helpful or not. Considering the answers given to this specific question, some students (11
students although 23 students were asked if they could participate) were interviewed on this issue, and asked whether they might make any suggestions in order to make written teacher feedback more effective and efficient for the students.

Table 24 (Question 15)

Reasons Students Feel Teacher Comments And Corrections Does Not Help Them Improve Their Writing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can improve only by writing more essays</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer oral teacher feedback, it works better</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can not incorporate the feedback into my next writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one can help me improve my writing, except myself</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forget the comments and corrections</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to write the way I want to</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I write and read more I can improve my writing, not through feedback</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher lacks interest in what I have written, s/he should pay more attention</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mistakes should be corrected directly, not implied</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher comments and corrections are useless and dull</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I lose my motivation, my teacher looks for native-like proficiency. S/he has very high expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because subjects could write more than one comment on any question and some wrote nothing on some questions, numbers do not add up to 160 and percentages are not calculated.
These students who participated in the interviews made several suggestions; and they are as follows:

1. Written teacher feedback should be accompanied by oral teacher feedback in order to clarify the points of confusion; and to verify and expand the written comments and corrections teacher made beforehand in written form.

2. Teachers should not only point out the weak points of the paper, but also offer some possible solutions for problematic areas. Some students reported that they did not know what they were supposed to do in response to some specific comments and corrections. For instance, one student said “my teacher says ‘the second paragraph is weak!’ or ‘bad organization!’, but not says how I can improve it. I have no idea what she really expects me to do”.

3. Teacher should avoid using imperative form when commenting. Suggestive form is more encouraging. Many students said “I hate when my teacher says ‘do this, do that’. Instead, she could have said ‘why don’t you do this and that?’ or ‘it would be much better if you did this or that’. Later is much more motivating, I believe”.

4. Teacher should avoid commenting and correcting every little piece of paper. Most of the students said that their teachers should focus more on global points, like content and organization; and that their teacher should avoid commenting just for the sake of commenting.

5. Teacher feedback should be accompanied by peer feedback. One student noted that she/he would like to see her/his paper discussed in the class in order to receive comments from her/his peers as well as to see what and how others have done.
6. Students should write several drafts on the same topic and have their teachers’ feedback each time; rather than writing on several different topics and having teacher response for each.

7. Teacher feedback should be specific in her/his responding behavior. One student said “when my teacher says ‘this is not clear’, I can not understand what exactly is not clear. She/he should tell me exactly what is wrong, I guess”.

8. Teacher should provide positive comments as well as negative comments since this is demotivating. One student stated “I do not think all I wrote can be that bad. There should be some points that can be praised, I believe. Why is it so hard for my teacher to admit that I have done something good”.

How Did Students Perceive Themselves As Learners And Writers?

The final two questions of the questionnaire (16 and 17) asked students to rate themselves as learners and writers.

Table 25 (Question 16)

Students Self-Evaluate Themselves As Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Evaluation</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>(73.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although majority perceived themselves as excellent or good learners, almost all of students perceived themselves as good or fair writers. The reason might be that the students may feel more confident of their academic abilities in their subject matters than of their writing abilities.

Table 26 (Question 17)

Students Self-Evaluate Their Writing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Evaluation</th>
<th>Number Of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>(70.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>(25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There seems to be a relationship between students’ perceptions of themselves as learners and writers and their attitudes toward their teachers’ comments and corrections. All of the students (9 students) who did not believe that their teachers’ comments and corrections helped them improve their writing skills were the ones who rated themselves as fair and poor learners and writers.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview of the study

This study investigated what Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides as written teacher feedback; and what Bilkent University first year students do with and think of the written teacher feedback they receive. In order to achieve this purpose, 160 Bilkent University first year students (out of 964) enrolled in various sections of three separate courses - ENG 101, 102 and 104 were given questionnaire; and 11 students who had answered the questionnaire beforehand were interviewed. The subjects involved in the study were from three departments - Economics, ELIT (English Language and Literature), AMER (American Language and Literature) - and from two faculties - Engineering, FADA (Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture), which Bilkent University Freshman English Unit provides first year English and composition courses for. The data were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. For the open ended items in the questionnaire and in the interviews, descriptive categories were developed.

This chapter presents a summary of the results gathered through the questionnaire and interviews, and it suggests a few important pedagogical implications. Limitations of the study, and the suggestions for further research are also discussed.

Summary of results and conclusions

This section discusses the findings and the conclusions that have been drawn through the questionnaire and the interviews conducted in order to answer my research...
questions. Each part refers to one research question. In addition, in relevant parts, some of the studies that has been reviewed in the literature are referred.

The Form and Type Of Written Teacher Feedback

The students reported that their teachers' feedback was in all forms, although they also noted that it was mostly in the forms of single words, phrases and complete sentences rather than in the form of symbols.

The students felt that they received most comments and corrections on content and followed (in this order) by organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. This is opposite to what previous studies reported. Cohen (1987), Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990), Fathman & Whalley (1990), Ferris (1995), Ferris (1997), Gök (1991), McCurdy (1992), Terdal (1990), Uzel (1995) and Zamel (1985) found that the majority of teachers' comments and corrections were on form rather than on content and organization.

Although the feedback students reported receiving was more on content of their papers, comments and corrections on organization seemed to be more appreciated. The students reported that they paid a lot of attention to organization and followed (in this order) by content, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. This is consistent with Fathman & Whalley's (1990) study, in which students noted that they appreciated their teachers' response to the development and organization of their papers as they perceived that this kind of teacher response helped their writing more than any other type of teacher response. However, what Engineering students reported is different. These students, like the students in Ferris' (1995), Ferris' (1997), Hedgcock & Lefkowitz's (1994), Leki's (1986), Leki's (1991) and Uzel's (1995) studies, reported that they paid more attention to form and that preferred extensive comments
on grammar rather than content as they believed comments and corrections on grammar helped them improve their English rather than any kind of comments and corrections they received; and that they could remember their grammatical mistakes and their corrections more vividly; and that they could avoid the same mistakes in their subsequent writing. In addition, they reported that they did not pay attention to their teachers’ comments and correction on their content as they reported that they did not believe their teachers’ comments and corrections on content would be valuable as they believe their teachers were not quite knowlegable about the topic they usually wrote about. As for the comments and corrections on organization, they said that they did not pay attention to this type of comments and corrections as they believed that they were quite good at it; and that they did not want to follow the same organization pattern and narrow the way of conveying their message by a single organization pattern which their teacher promotes.

Most of the students (142 out of 149) reported that they received positive comments on their compositions although most of them could not give any specific examples. When students received positive comments and corrections they reported that these comments and corrections were usually on content and organization. They also noted that when they receive positive comments they found it very motivating and encouraging.

What Students Do With The Written Teacher Feedback They Receive

Most of the students reported they reread all of their papers, however, they did not think about all of the comments and corrections they received, but to most of their teachers’ comments and corrections. This is consistent with Cohen & Cavalcanti’s (1990) and McCurdy’s (1992) studies. They also reported that they
usually attend to the comments and corrections on grammar, vocabulary and mechanics since these types of teacher feedback were easy to handle as their teacher already provides the correct forms.

Although students reported they reread all of each composition there are still a large number of students (56.3 %) who did not reread all of their papers and who did not think about all of their teachers’ comments and corrections carefully. At this point it should be noted that unless the students are not required to rewrite their papers they are not likely to read and attend to all of their teachers’ comments and corrections.

Most of the students reported that they usually looked over corrections, kept the points their teachers made in mind, checked a dictionary. They seem to try to make corrections themselves rather than take any further steps to respond to the feedback they received after they have their papers back with their teachers’ comments and corrections. This is consistent with what Cohen (1987), Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990), Ferris (1995) and McCurdy (1992) found. Similarly, in these studies students reported that they simply made a mental note of their teachers’ comments and corrections after they received their papers back with their teachers’ comments and corrections.

Students reported they rarely misunderstood their teacher feedback; and the comments and corrections they did not understand were usually the comments and corrections on content and organization, and general comments and correction. Some other students also noted specific problems with reading their teachers’ handwriting and with their word choice and with figuring out what specific symbols meant. This is what Cohen (1987) and Zamel (1985) also found. Zamel (1985) noted that teacher feedback tended to be unclear and imprecise. Cohen (1987) revealed that students
could not understand the comments when they were single words and short phrases, and thus, they needed detailed comments and corrections which explained the weak points in detail. When students were asked to describe the strategies they employed in such a case, they reported they seek help from outside sources, mostly ask teacher for help. This is consistent with Ferris’ (1995) study. As in Ferris’ (1995) study, most of the students stated that they perceived their teachers as the ultimate source of knowledge and help.

When students were asked whether they had any comments and corrections they did not agree with, they reported that they rarely did; and these comments and corrections were usually on content and organization. When students were asked to describe the strategies they employed in such a case they reported that they usually discussed the issue with the teacher in class and/or break time. Most of them also noted that they did not make appointment for that purpose although this was what tutorials were for and this was what they were required to do.

What Students Think Of The Written Teacher Feedback They Receive

Almost all students (120 out of 135) felt that their teachers’ feedback indeed helped them improve their writing skills because it helped them know what to improve or avoid in the future, find their mistakes and clarify their ideas. Most of the students seemed to respect their teachers’ opinions and appreciate their efforts and attention. This is consistent with Cohen & Cavalcanti’s (1990), Ferris’ (1995) and McCurdy’s (1992) studies.

However, some students made some suggestions in order to make written teacher feedback more efficient and effective. They suggested that it should be accompanied by oral teacher feedback as they believed this would work more
efficiently. They also suggested that their teachers should be specific in their comments and corrections, offer suggestions in order to improve the weak points that had been indicated; and provide positive feedback whenever possible as they reported that this was very encouraging.

**Pedagogical Implications**

The results presented in detail imply a few implications that should be taken into consideration. In this part, each is discussed in detail.

**Tutorials**

As revealed in both questionnaire and interviews, students have some difficulty in understanding and interpreting their teachers’ comments and corrections although they also report that this happens rarely. As they also reported, they usually ask their teachers for further discussion and explanation in such a case. However, they tend to ask their teachers for further explanation in class or/and break time. At this point, one should question the quality of teacher explanation and discussion of the problematic point as it would be highly likely that the period would not be adequate for a good discussion and explanation. Therefore, the students should be first informed about the tutorials, i.e., what they are for, and how students can make appointment; and then they should be encouraged to use the tutorials. In addition, the students not only expected to make appointment for further discussion and explanation, but also teachers should make appointments for further explanation and discussions of the comments and see their students regularly outside the classroom instruction. By this means, written teacher feedback could be accompanied by oral teacher feedback in order to verify, expand, and clarify the written teacher feedback.
Revision Requirements

The results suggest that most of the students do not think about all of their teachers' comments and corrections. In order to make students reread and attend to all comments and corrections, it seems that students should be required strictly to rewrite their compositions. Unless Bilkent Freshman English Unit makes some modifications in its revision requirements and unless the Unit requires the students revise their papers strictly, the students are unlikely to attend to all of their teachers' feedback. Ferris' (1995) and McCurdy's studies note the same conclusions and indicate that because students must rethink and revise previously written essay drafts they are more likely to pay close attention to their teachers' advise on how to do so than in a situation in which they receive a paper with comments and corrections to apply to a completely new essay assignment. Thus, it seems that teacher written response works best when students are required to revise several drafts of the same paper and when they receive continous teacher feedback on each of the drafts revised.

Feedback Procedures

As revealed in the questionnaire and interviews, the students are mostly happy with the feedback they receive. However, the suggestions the students made in the interviews are worth taking into consideration in order to make written teacher feedback more effective and efficient. Thus, the feedback procedures employed at the Unit should be reconsidered; and workshops for teachers especially for new teachers, should be conducted.

Training

Although most of the students pay close attention to their teachers' comments and corrections there are still a number of students, especially Engineering students,
who ignore the feedback they receive. The comments and corrections which these students ignore are mostly the comments and corrections on content. The reason why the students disregard their teachers’ comments and correction on content, as the students participated in the interviews indicated, that students do not believe that their writing teacher is knowledgeable about the subjects they write, especially if they write about the subject matters they study. This result urge the need for the training of Bilkent Freshman English Unit instructors about the subject matters their students study.

Limitations Of The Study

My study has a few limitations which should be mentioned. One limitation is about the student questionnaire answers. The students who participated in the questionnaire might have paid special attention to their answers; and therefore they might have written the ideal expected answers, not what they actually thought of and did with the feedback they received. This might have affected the data collected.

Another limitation is about the interviews. Although 23 students were asked if they would like to participate in the interviews, only a small number of students (11 students) actually participated. If the number had been able to be increased, I believe, more valuable information could have been collected.

A final limitation is about the means of collecting data. In this study, the data about what Bilkent Freshman English Unit provides in terms of written teacher feedback was collected only by means of students questionnaire and interviews, in which students were asked what they perceived they received as written teacher feedback. In other words, the data relies on only what students reported receiving. Another source could have been used for the purpose of triangulation. Actual student
papers and their teachers' comments and corrections could have been examined as well. However, due to the time constraints this could not be achieved.

**Suggestions For Further Research**

A further research examining student drafts and teacher comments and corrections; and having interviews with both students and teachers about what teachers meant by specific comment and correction and what students understood by that specific teacher comment and correction; and finally comparing these two would provide more insights into the role and effect of written teacher feedback in student revisions.

As another suggestion, some experimental studies may be conducted. For instance, in experimental and control groups different types of feedback can be examined, such as written feedback versus written feedback accompanied by oral feedback; feedback on content and organization versus feedback on all aspects of writing—content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics; or feedback in single draft versus multiple draft settings.

A final suggestion might be a study about the effectiveness of tutorials. A questionnaire can be given to the students and interviews can be held for the purpose of evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of tutorials.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research study conducted to identify what Bilkent first year students think of and do with the teacher written feedback they receive. I am aware that there is no risk involved in my participation. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I will take part in an interview as a part of this study. I know that this interview will be recorded. I understand that my participation is completely confidential and that my name will not be used in the reports.

Name
Signature
Date

The researcher:
Pelin Altan
MA-TEFL Program
Faculty Of Humanities and Letters
Bilkent University
Appendix B
Student Questionnaire

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting a research study as part of my studies in the MA-TEFL Program at Bilkent University. This questionnaire is designed to gather information for the study I intend to conduct about what Bilkent first-year students’ think of and do with the written teacher feedback they receive.

You are one of the students who were randomly selected and your participation will be appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential; that is, nobody will see your responses except for the researcher and your name will not be mentioned in the study. Therefore, please do answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

Please check the appropriate options ( ) and give short answers where necessary, and where the questions are open-ended please give as much information as you can since your answers will provide very important and valuable information with the researcher for the study and for the improvement of the instructions in first year English 101, 102 and 104 courses.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: __________________________

Section: __________________________

Department: __________________________

1. Is this your first year in your department?

Yes ____ No ____

If no, please specify your year ______

2. Did you study at BUSEL (Bilkent University of English School)?

Yes ____ No ____
3. Which course are you taking this semester? Please check the appropriate answer.

ENG 101  ___  ENG 102  ___  ENG 104  ___

II. FEEDBACK

Please think of the essays that your teacher gives feedback on, and returns to you. You will be asked questions about what you think of and do with the written feedback you receive from your teacher. Please answer the questions as honestly as you can.

4. Please describe the type of the comments your teacher makes by checking the appropriate items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comments</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symbols (arrows etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single words (“clear” etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrases (“too general” etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complete sentences (&quot;expand this part a bit further” etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. To what extent, do your teacher’s comments and corrections deal with? Please check the appropriate answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mechanics (punctuation, spelling)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How much of each composition do you read over again when your instructor returns it to you?

all of it  ___  most of it  ___  some of it  ___  none of it  ___
7. How many of your teacher's comments and corrections do you think about carefully?

all of them   most of them   some of them   none of them

8. If you pay attention to what your teacher wrote, how much attention do you pay to the comments and corrections involving:

content  a lot  some  little  none
organization  

vocabulary  
grammar  
mechanics  (punctuation, spelling)

9. Describe what you usually do after you read your teacher's comments and corrections. Please check the appropriate item(s).

___ try to keep in mind
___ write down points
___ look over corrections
___ figure out corrections
___ check what others have done
___ rewrite the paper
___ check dictionary
___ check grammar book
___ nothing

others:_________________________________________________________

10. Are there any comments and corrections that you do not understand?

often ___  sometimes ___  rarely ___  never ___
Please describe those comments and corrections that you do not understand by checking the appropriate item(s):

___ grammar terms
___ abbreviations
___ symbols
___ word choice
___ handwriting
___ comments that are too general
___ comments that are too specific
___ comments about content
___ comments about organization
___ comments about grammar
___ comments about vocabulary
___ comments about mechanics

others:________________________________________________________________________

11. What do you do about those comments or corrections that you do not understand? (e.g., ask teacher for help, ask friends for help, nothing... etc.)

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

12. Are there any comments or corrections that you do not agree with?

often ___ sometimes ___ rarely ___ never ___
Please describe those comments and corrections you do not agree with by checking the appropriate item(s):

___ comments on content

___ comments on organization

___ comments on vocabulary

___ comments on grammar

___ comments on mechanics (punctuation, spelling)

others: __________________________________________

13. What do you do about those comments or corrections that you do not agree with? (e.g., discuss with the teacher, ignore...etc.)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

14. Are any of your teacher’s comments positive?

often ____ sometimes ____ rarely ____ never ____

If yes, please give an example:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
15. Do you feel that your teacher’s comments and corrections help you improve your writing skills? Why/ Why not?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

16. How would you rate yourself as a learner?

Excellent ___    Good ___    Fair ___    Poor ___

17. How would you rate your skills in writing?

Excellent ___    Good ___    Fair ___    Poor ___
Appendix C
Interview Sheet

STUDENT INTERVIEW SHEET

Background:

1. What is your department?

2. Is this your first year in your department?

3. Which course are you taking this semester?

4. Did you study at BUSEL? If yes, for how long?

Course Content:

5. Can you briefly tell me what exactly you are doing in the course?

Written Teacher Feedback:

6. What type of feedback do you receive in your writing courses, i.e., peer feedback, teacher feedback? Which one do you like best and which one do you prefer most?

7. In what forms do you usually get written teacher feedback, i.e., symbols, single words, phrases, complete sentences?

8. What does written teacher feedback tend to cover most, i.e., content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics?

9. How do you feel about your teacher’s comments and corrections? Do you think that your teacher’s feedback help you improve your writing? Why/ Why not?

10. Do you have any suggestions about the feedback procedure that has been applied in Bilkent Freshman English Unit?
Researcher: Is this your first year at the department?

Student: No, this is not my first year at the department, it is my second year. Well, actually it is my third year at the department. I had to repeat one year, but I am a second year student. I take ENG 102 for the first time though. I took ENG 101 three semesters ago, now it is time to take this course. I could not take 102 because of the irregularities in my course schedule before, fortunately this year I can. I already passed ENG 101, three semesters ago.

Researcher: Did you study at BUSEL?

Student: Yes. For one and half years. I had not studied English at all before I came to Bilkent University, so I had to start right from the first level, from Foundation; and I went through all the levels in one and half years. I started to study at the department as irregular student.

Researcher: Do you like writing?

Student: Writing? Actually, yes I do, but I had not been writing for so long. The last time I wrote something was three semesters ago, when I was taking ENG 101. I prefer to write though, rather than to speak. I feel more comfortable when writing than when I am speaking.

Researcher: Do you ever write something except the essays that you have to write in your English course, ENG 102?

Student: No, I do not. However, I have to write the assignments for the other courses. I submit term papers as well. I do not write anything else, except these.
Researcher: Can you tell me what exactly you are doing in your English course, ENG 102?

Student: Of course. ENG 102 is much more practical than 101. We went to video room for a couple of times. I used to feel very anxious when I was speaking since I was scared that my classmates would tease me if I made any mistakes. But now I feel much comfortable, since we practice it a lot in 102. I learned to relax when speaking.

Researcher: Do you ever read in the course?

Student: Yes, we do. We read texts, and then we answer the questions, and then discuss them.

Researcher: What are the texts you read about, I mean, usually?

Student: They are generally about art, they have department specific subjects. For example, we read and discussed whether we should practice censorship in art or not. This kind of subjects.

Researcher: So you read, answer the questions, and discuss the issues in the texts. Then what do you do?

Student: We write, too. We learn some vocabulary.

Researcher: Writing?

Student: Yes. We did a couple of things, I mean, in terms of writing. We watched movies and wrote about the movies we watched.

Researcher: What did you write about the movies?

Student: We wrote something like a summary.

Researcher: Any argumentative essays?

Student: No, we have not written any argumentative essays so far.
Researcher: Have you ever received feedback on what you wrote?

Student: Yes. We do not receive feedback for everything we write though, just for the important things.

Researcher: What do you mean by “important things”?

Student: For example, we had feedback for our presentation scripts. Sometimes we write just for the sake of practising writing and we do not receive any feedback for this kind of writing, for example.

Researcher: Any term papers?

Student: No, we have not written any term paper for this course. We made two presentations in this semester and we wrote drafts for the presentations. They were like scripts.

Researcher: What kind of feedback do you receive?

Student: I usually have comments on my organization, and the content of my paper. They are in the form of suggestions, like “Don’t you think this part would sound better if you had done this and that?” I sometimes have grammar corrections as well, but the comments are usually on content and organization.

Researcher: Would you like to have your teacher’s feedback on your content and organization?

Student: Yes.

Researcher: Do you have any suggestions about the comments and corrections you receive?

Student: Not really, but I can suggest something, I guess. We might have discussed each paper in class and we could have received feedback from our peers as well as from our teacher.
Researcher: Then you only have feedback from your teacher and that is all?

Student: Yes, that is right.

Researcher: Do you receive any oral teacher feedback?

Student: No.

Researcher: You have tutorials but?

Student: I had never heard of it before, I learned such a thing from one of my friends enrolling in ENG 102 and applying tutorials.

Researcher: If you had known?

Student: Of course. I would have used tutorials.

Researcher: Have you ever received any feedback that you did not understand or that you did not agree with?

Student: No. If I had, I would ask my teacher, of course.

Researcher: Do you think the feedback you receive from your teacher help you improve your writing?

Student: Actually, I have to say something about it, some kind of suggestion. What we are really supposed to do, as students I mean, is to rewrite the essay right after having the feedback and then once again consult our teacher, I mean, to show what we have revised and ask if what we have done is sufficient or not, and if not, to ask what else could be done to improve it better. However, what we always do is to rewrite it just a night before the due date, without consulting our teacher at all. I believe we should see our teacher constantly, and ask for his/her suggestions.

Researcher: Don't you revise your paper?

Student: Yes we do, but we do not ask our teacher on the process of writing, if what you have done is okay or not. However, we should do so.
Researcher: Well, actually this is what tutorials are for but you said you did not know about this issue.

Student: No, I did not know it. As I have told you, my friend told me about it. I have not applied any tutorials so far.

Researcher: How many drafts do you write, I mean as a class?

Student: We first freewrite about the topic in the text. Organization is not so important when you are doing this. We write for about 300-350 words, we just write whatever comes to our mind. Content is much more important. Then we give our freewriting to our teacher, we have feedback on it. After we have it back with our teacher’s comments and corrections on, we start to write our first draft. In our first draft everything is important, I mean, organization, grammar, content and so on. We give the first draft with our freewriting, and we have feedback on our first draft. Finally, we write the last draft considering the feedback on our first draft.

Researcher: You only receive written teacher feedback then?

Student: Yes.

Researcher: But you want to receive feedback from your peers as well, right?

Student: Yes.

Researcher: Why would you want that?

Student: I believe that I can learn from my friends and have their suggestions on my paper. Besides, I want to see what others have done and how they have written. There are some students having the top grades, I would like to see what to be done to be able to get the highest grade. Their essays would be a good model for me, I guess.

Researcher: What type of feedback would you like to have on your paper?
Student: Oral feedback works better, I guess. Teacher and peer oral feedback could have been combined somehow.

Researcher: Do you have any further suggestions?

Student: Not really, I have said all I wanted to say.

Researcher: Then, I should say that is all. Thank you very much for your participation. You have helped me a lot, and I appreciate this. Thank you.

Student: Actually, I should thank you for asking our opinions. Thank you.