

EFL Student Reactions to Instructor Feedback on Multiple-Draft Composition Writing

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Abstract: A number of L1 and L2 studies examined students' reactions to their instructors' comments in single-draft contexts as opposed to multiple-draft settings. However, a few studies were undertaken in multiple-draft L2 composition classrooms. No such studies have been carried out in EFL situations. Thirty-six EFL English-majors participated in this study. The findings revealed that students reread more of their instructor's feedback on the first drafts of their essays than on the second and they did so more on the second than on the final ones; that they received more comments on word choice, grammar, and mechanics in the first drafts than in the second and they did so more in the second than in the final ones; that they became more self-dependent in responding to their instructor's comments by utilizing more the strategy of correcting their writing mistakes by themselves in the final drafts than in the second, and they did so more in the second than in the first drafts; and that they appreciated receiving feedback and considered it positive, and that they found this feedback useful in improving their writing performance. Results also showed that students faced problems in understanding their instructor's comments and corrections. (**Keywords:** Instructor feedback; Multiple drafts; EFL writing; Students' responses).

Introduction

No doubt, composition teachers play an important role in providing feedback to their students. An ESL writing teacher "plays several different roles, among them coach, judge, facilitator, evaluator, interested reader, and copy editor" (Reid, 1993: 217). It is evident that the teachers' feedback is essential to both the instructor and the students. Studies examining many aspects of ESL writing instruction have shown that students expect and appreciate their instructors' feedback on their writing (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990 ; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994; McCurdy, 1992). Teachers feel that devoting a lot of time and effort to provide constructive oral and written feedback on students' writing is an important part of their career as writing teachers.

In spite of the importance of the instructor's role in providing feedback on students' writing, both L1 and L2 research provide very little evidence that such feedback helps students to improve their writing (Leki, 1990). Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) made a comparison between many types of instructors' comments on L1 writing (e.g. oral vs. written, explicit vs. implicit, praise

ردود فعل طالب اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية على التغذية الراجعة للمدرس على كتابة الإنشاء بأسلوب المسودات المتعددة

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ملخص: استقصت عدداً من الدراسات المتعلقة باللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أولى أو لغة ثانية ردود فعل الطلبة على تعليقات مدرسيهم في بيئات تعليمية تستخدم أسلوب كتابة المسودة الواحدة نقيضاً لأسلوب كتابة المسودات المتعددة. وعلى أي حال، فإن عدد قليل من الدراسات أجريت على طلبة يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة ثانية في صفوف تستخدم أسلوب كتابة المسودات المتعددة. مثل هذه الدراسات لم تجر على طلبة يكتبون باللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. شارك في هذه الدراسة 36 طالباً متخصصاً في اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. أظهرت النتائج بأن الطلبة أعادوا قراءة التغذية الراجعة لمدرسيهم على المسودات الأولى من مقالاتهم أكثر من الثانية والثانية أكثر من النهائية وأنهم تلقوا تعليقات متعلقة باختيار الكلمة المناسبة و القواعد وآليات الكتابة على المسودات الأولى أكثر من الثانية و على الثانية أكثر من النهائية، وأصبحوا أكثر اعتماداً على أنفسهم في الاستجابة لتعليقات مدرسيهم باستخدام إستراتيجية تصحيح الأخطاء بأنفسهم في المسودات النهائية أكثر من الثانية وفي الثانية أكثر من الأولى، وطمنا تلقيهم التغذية الراجعة واعتبروها ايجابية، ووجدوا أن التغذية الراجعة مفيدة لهم في تحسين أدائهم الكتابي. و أظهرت النتائج أيضاً أن الطلبة واجهوا مشكلات في فهم تعليقات وتصحيحات مدرسيهم. (الكلمات المفتاحية: التغذية الراجعة للمدرس، المسودات المتعددة، الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية كلفة أجنبية، استجابات الطلبة).

vs. criticism) and found that none of these comments had much influence on student writing. The "L1 teacher comment has little impact on student writing" (Hilllocks, 1986: 165). By the same token, L2 research has yielded similar results.

On the other hand, some researchers questioned the findings of these studies and ascribed the ineffectiveness of corrective feedback to many factors such as research design, methodology, and external variables that are beyond the control of the researcher (Guenette, 2007). "If research has failed to establish that annotations on student papers help them improve their writing, it may well be that the problem is not the annotation but the entire teaching environment" (Leki, 1990, p. 63). Other scholars reported that feedback on initial drafts, which are to be subsequently revised, are more useful in facilitating student improvement than

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comments on final drafts (Freedman, 1987; Hillocks, 1986; Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981; Krashen, 1984). Berger (1991) reviewed L1 and L2 studies on the effect of teacher, peer, and self feedback on helping students revise and improve their writing concluding that many L2 studies seem to show that teacher comments on preliminary drafts (first and second) helped students to revise effectively (Chaudron, 1983; Zhang, 1985; Zhang and Halpern, 1988). Fathman and Whalley (1990) pointed out that when students received comments and/or corrections on both the content and form of their writing, students' revised writing improved in overall quality and in linguistic accuracy.

A related area of research dealing with instructors' feedback on students' writing has investigated students' preferences and reactions to their teachers' comments. Leki (1990), reviewing L1 research on this topic, found that L1 students do not pay attention to teachers' comments, do not understand it, and feel some hostility about teachers' attempts to dominate their ideas and writing.

Two groups of studies surveyed and interviewed ESL and/or EFL writing students to obtain their feedback on teachers' comments (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994). In the first group, students were asked about the type of feedback they prefer to receive, on both form and content (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Radecki and Swales, 1988), while the second examined students' responses to feedback they received (Cohen, 1987; Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; McCurdy, 1992). When asking students about the type of feedback they preferred to receive, Leki (1991) and Radecki and Swales (1988) found that students generally prefer extensive comments on grammar rather than on content. Hedgecock and Lefkowitz (1994) reported more complex results. For example, EFL students paid more attention to form, while ESL students attended to the teacher's comments and corrections on both content and sentence-level. The authors ascribed this result to the fact that EFL students use L2 writing as a form of language practice, while ESL students use their writing skills for all their academic study.

In the second group of studies, students were asked a number of questions about their perceptions of what their teachers actually paid more attention to when responding to their essays. Among these questions were: Did they reread their papers when returned? Did they pay attention to their teachers' comments? What strategies did they adopt to make use of their teachers' feedback in subsequent writing assignments? Did they face problems in understanding any of the teacher's comments, and if so, what did they do to solve these problems?

Cohen (1987) was the first to address such questions. He reported that most of the students claimed to have reread their papers and made use of their teachers' comments, but 20% did not do so. Additionally, students in general reported "a limited

repertoire of strategies for processing teacher feedback" (Cohen, 1987: 65). Most students said that they merely "made a mental note" (Cohen, 1987: 63) of their teachers' feedback. He concluded that his findings suggested "that the activity of teacher feedback as currently constituted and realized might have a more limited impact on the learners than the teachers would desire" (Cohen, 1987: 66).

On the other hand, other studies showed more positive results (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; McCurdy, 1992). The results revealed that students in general were happy with the feedback they received, said they paid attention to it, and found it beneficial. Although the students in McCurdy's (1992) study reported having a number of problems in understanding their teacher's feedback, they used a wide variety of strategies in responding to their teacher's comments such as asking the teacher for help and looking up corrections in a grammar book.

While most of the previous studies on L2 students' responses to teachers' feedback were conducted in a single-draft context, a few of them were carried out in contexts where revision and multiple drafts were required (Ferris, 1995; Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994). Ferris (1995) pointed that students pay more attention to their instructor's feedback given on initial drafts than on final ones, that they have a variety of problems understanding teachers' comments, that they use various strategies to address these comments, and that they find their instructor's comments useful in helping them to improve their writing. It is quite logical to find that students' attention to the teacher's feedback in multiple drafts is different from that in single-draft settings because, by revising previously written drafts, students are likely to take the teacher's comments more seriously than they do so in a single-draft setting, where students are required to write only one draft and are not given a second and/or a third chance to revise their drafts so that they can benefit from their instructor's comments. Moreover, they are graded just on their final product with comments and corrections to be applied to completely new writing assignments.

Leki (1991) indicated that students strongly preferred extensive error correction on their papers and suggested that "a follow-up questionnaire at the end of a semester of writing using a process, multiple-draft approach might have been useful in order to see if students' attitudes toward errors are changed by an approach which does not emphasize errors" (p. 210).

Most of the previous L1 and L2 writing studies were made in single-draft situations where students learn and use the target language on a day-to-day basis in an English-speaking environment. However, the present study deals with using the multiple-draft teaching approach in an EFL context where students are exposed to a very limited amount of English instruction (just classroom instruction). Since no attempts have been made in the Arab World to investigate EFL students' reactions to instructors' feedback on their

compositions in multiple-draft settings, this study is intended to examine these reactions and see whether there are differences between students' responses to the instructor's comments on the first, second, and final drafts. It is noteworthy that the multiple-draft approach is not common in the Arab academic institutions, and very few teachers use it.

To build on previous research and to encourage the implementation of the process-oriented approach in EFL writing classrooms, this study adopts the methodology which was originally designed and used by Cohen (1987) and McCurdy (1992) in single-draft settings, and which was then adapted and used by Ferris (1995) in a multiple-draft context.

Research Questions

The present study will try to answer the eleven questions adjusted by Ferris (1987 but in an EFL multiple-draft learning environment, particularly, with Jordanian Arab writing students.

1. How much of each composition do students read over again when their instructor return it to them?
2. How many of the instructor's comments and corrections do students think about carefully?
3. How many of the instructor's comments and corrections involve content/ideas, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics?
4. How much attention do students pay to the comments on content/ideas, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics?
5. What do students do after reading their instructor's comments?
6. Are there ever any problems that students have with their instructor's feedback?
7. What do students do with the comments that they do not understand?
8. Are any of the instructor's comments positive?
9. Do students feel that these comments help them improve their composition?
10. How would students rate themselves as learners?
11. How would students rate their skills in writing composition?

Study Limitations

This study investigates students' reaction to an instructor's comments in a multiple-draft setting as opposed to single-draft environments, but it does not examine the relationship between student preferences and error correction strategies used to respond to the instructor's comments and their overall writing achievement. Moreover, it is restricted to only one writing class in one EFL educational environment in one country.

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were 36 EFL Jordanian Arab students, majoring in English language and literature and taking a 202 composition class at Yarmouk University, Jordan. The majority of them had very little experience in writing in a foreign language, and this was the first writing course they took as English

majors. Students reported that this was the first time they had to write in English using the multiple-draft approach.

Pedagogical Context

The subjects had English 202 writing course in Spring 2007. This is a three-credit-hour course and is a prerequisite for English 206, an essay writing course. The students were taught how to write well-organized, coherent, cohesive, complete, and unified paragraphs using different rhetorical patterns. The researcher, a writing instructor, used a multiple-draft syllabus in which students were required to write three assignments with three drafts each throughout a 16-week semester. The instructor provided two types of feedback, indirect coded written feedback and oral feedback on each draft, focusing on both form and content in all the three drafts. In the former type of feedback, the instructor pointed out to the exact location and type of error involved by using a code (e.g., s-v means error in subject-verb agreement) but did not provide a correction, thereby leaving students to figure out the error and correct it. In the latter type of feedback, the instructor had teacher-student conferences where he allotted each student a ten-minute conference, giving students the opportunity to ask questions about their errors and the corrections they had already received as well as the chance to receive additional explanations and examples. Each conference began with the researcher/ instructor asking students which corrections they had not understood or wanted further examples of.

Data Collection

The students were surveyed during the Spring 2007 semester using the questionnaire originally developed by McCurdy (1992) for the single draft setting and later adjusted by Ferris (1995) for the multiple-draft context (see Appendix). The questionnaire, which consisted of eleven questions, was administered to 36 English-major students during the fourteenth week of a 16-week semester, in which students were involved in writing three assignments with three drafts each and were asked to respond to comments provided on their writing. The students' names remained anonymous.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the questions of the questionnaire, and Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three Related Samples was used to examine whether there were differences between students' responses to the instructor's comments on the first, second, and final drafts.

Results and Discussion

To answer the first research question, "*How much of each composition did students read over again when their instructor returned it to them?*", frequencies and percentages of students' responses to the instructor's comments and corrections on the first, second, and final drafts, on a four-point scale (All of it, most of it, some of it, and none of it), were computed. Table 1 presents the findings.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to instructor's comments on the three drafts.

Draft	Statistics	None	Some of it	Most of it	All of it	Total
*First	N		1	2	33	36
	%		2.8	5.6	91.7	100.0
*Second	N	1	2	7	26	36
	%	2.8	5.6	19.4	72.2	100.0
*Final	N	3	4	5	24	36
	%	8.3	11.1	13.9	66.7	100.0

Table 1 shows that there were statistical differences among the mean ranks of students' responses to the instructor's feedback on the three drafts

Table 2: Differences between students' responses to comments on the three drafts.

Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^(a)			
						25th	50th (Median)	75th		N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
First	36	3.89	0.398	2	4	4	4	4	2.22				
Second	36	3.61	0.728	1	4	3	4	4	1.94	36	8.000	2	* 0.018
Final	36	3.39	0.994	1	4	3	4	4	1.83				

* P < 0.05 (Friedman Three-Related Sample Test)

In order to verify the significance of these differences, Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three-Related Samples was used. Employing the crossed design, the researcher found significant differences between the first, second and final drafts at ($\alpha = 0.05$), as shown in Table 2. Students were more likely to reread the first than the second and the second more than the final drafts of their essays.

In this multiple-draft learning situation, student writers seem to have taken their writing and their instructor's feedback quite seriously. By giving students the opportunity to revise their drafts more than once, the researcher realized that the vast majority of them reported paying great attention to their own drafts. This result is consistent with what Ferris (1995) reached at in

his study. Even the final drafts, which students do not usually rewrite, the students in this study reread more of their papers than did students in previous studies conducted in single-draft contexts. A possible explanation for this is that asking students to write more than one draft and revise these drafts according to the instructor's comments encourages them to know how their instructor received and appreciated their efforts.

To answer the second question, "How many of the instructor's comments and corrections did students think about carefully?", frequencies and percentages of students' responses to the instructor's comments and corrections on the three drafts on a four-point scale (All of it, most of it, some of it, and none of it) were computed as in Table 3 .

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to instructor's comments on the three drafts.

Draft	Statistic	None	Some of them	Most of them	All of them	Total
First	N		1	6	29	36
	%		2.8	16.7	80.6	100.0
Second	N	1	1	5	29	36
	%	2.8	2.8	13.9	80.6	100.0
Final	N	2	2	10	22	36
	%	5.6	5.6	27.8	61.1	100.0

By looking at Table 3, we can say that there were statistical differences among the mean ranks of students' responses to the instructor's feedback.

Table 4: Differences between students' responses to the comments on the three drafts.

Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	Test Statistics(a)			
						25th	50th (Median)	75th		N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
First	36	3.78	0.485	2	4	4	4	4	2.10	36	4.379	2	0.112
Second	36	3.72	0.659	1	4	4	4	4	2.08				
Final	36	3.44	0.843	1	4	3	4	4	1.82				

Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three-Related Samples was used to uncover the significance of these differences. Using the crossed design, the findings showed no significant differences between the students' responses to comments on the three drafts, as displayed in Table 4.

Students did not prefer comments on one draft to another. On the contrary, they attended to comments on all drafts. This result contradicts Ferris's (1995) who found that students paid more attention to their instructor's comments on the earlier drafts than on the final ones. But when the *All* and *Most* categories were combined, students were likely to pay more attention to

their instructor's comments on the first and second drafts than to those on the final draft.

To answer the third question, "How many of the comments and corrections involved content/ideas, organization, grammar, word choice, and writing mechanics like spelling, punctuation, etc.?", frequencies and percentages of students reporting the number of the instructor's corrections and comments on content, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics in the three drafts, on a four-point scale (A lot, Some, A little, and None) were calculated and presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to instructor's comments on the three drafts.

Item	Draft	Statistic	None	A little	Some	A lot	Total
Content/ideas	First	N	2	6	8	20	36
		%	5.6	16.7	22.2	55.6	100.0
	Second	N	3	9	6	18	36
		%	8.3	25.0	16.7	50.0	100.0
	Final	N	4	7	8	17	36
		%	11.1	19.4	22.2	47.2	100.0
Organization	First	N	1	8	19	8	36
		%	2.8	22.2	52.8	22.2	100.0
	Second	N	5	9	9	13	36
		%	13.9	25.0	25.0	36.1	100.0
	Final	N	6	10	9	11	36
		%	16.7	27.8	25.0	30.6	100.0
*Grammar	First	N	2	4	11	19	36
		%	5.6	11.1	30.6	52.8	100.0
	Second	N	3	6	13	14	36
		%	8.3	16.7	36.1	38.9	100.0
	Final	N	3	13	4	16	36
		%	8.3	36.1	11.1	44.4	100.0
* word Choice	First	N		2	14	20	36
		%		5.6	38.9	55.6	100.0
	Second	N	2	7	17	10	36
		%	5.6	19.4	47.2	27.8	100.0
	Final	N	4	10	11	11	36
		%	11.1	27.8	30.6	30.6	100.0
* (Mechanics) like spelling, punctuation, etc.	First	N	2	9	9	16	36
		%	5.6	25.0	25.0	44.4	100.0
	Second	N	2	11	12	11	36
		%	5.6	30.6	33.3	30.6	100.0
	Final	N	9	9	5	13	36
		%	25.0	25.0	13.9	36.1	100.0

It is noticed from Table 5 that there were statistical differences among the mean ranks of students' responses to comments and corrections on content/ideas,

organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics in the three drafts.

Table 6: Differences between students' responses to comments on five features of writing in the three drafts.

Item	Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^(a)			
							25th	50th (Median)	75th		N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Content/ideas?	First	36	3.28	0.944	1	4	3.00	4.00	4.00	2.19	36	4.111	2	0.128
	Second	36	3.08	1.052	1	4	2.00	3.50	4.00	1.92				
	Final	36	3.06	1.068	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.89				
Organization?	First	36	2.94	0.754	1	4	2.25	3.00	3.00	2.15	36	2.860	2	0.239
	Second	36	2.83	1.082	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	2.01				
	Final	36	2.69	1.091	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.83				
Grammar?	First	36	3.31	0.889	1	4	3.00	4.00	4.00	2.24	36	6.026	2	* 0.049
	Second	36	3.06	0.955	1	4	2.25	3.00	4.00	1.93				
	Final	36	2.92	1.079	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.83				
word Choice?	First	36	3.50	0.609	2	4	3.00	4.00	4.00	2.43	36	18.099	2	* 0.000
	Second	36	2.97	0.845	1	4	2.25	3.00	4.00	1.83				
	Final	36	2.81	1.009	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.74				
(Mechanics) like spelling, punctuation,... etc.?	First	36	3.08	0.967	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	2.21	36	7.400	2	* 0.025
	Second	36	2.89	0.919	1	4	2.00	3.00	4.00	2.03				
	Final	36	2.61	1.225	1	4	1.25	2.50	4.00	1.76				

* P < 0.05 (Friedman Three-Related Sample Test)

Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three-Related Samples was employed to uncover the significance of these differences. The results revealed that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the first, second, and final drafts in three writing aspects: word choice, grammar, and mechanics. The findings are presented in Table 6. As this table illustrates, students felt they received the most comments on word choice, grammar, and mechanics (defined as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization) in the first than in the second and in the second more than in the final.

This seems reasonable in the multiple-draft context because students are required to revise their earlier drafts to which the instructor will naturally respond, while the final draft receives fewer comments which students will not correct. This indicates that as students proceed in their writing, they make more use of their instructor's comments, and, as a result, the number of major errors are likely to commit in the initial drafts decreases in the final draft.

The instructor's paying more attention to errors in word choice and mechanics does not match with

previous studies which gave priority to comments on content and organization in addition to grammar (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994; McCurdy, 1992). However, this study agrees with other studies in which grammar is one of the writing aspects that received greater attention (Cohen, 1987; Leki, 1991; Radecki and Swales, 1988). Although the researcher/ instructor of this study is interested in feedback on both form and content, it seems that students preferred form to content. A possible explanation for this finding is that as students were completing the survey, they were confused and unable to remember what their instructor actually did on the various drafts. The reason why students reported that their instructor paid more attention to word choice while correcting their papers is that those students had a problem in selecting the appropriate word, a problem most EFL students face in writing. We know that foreign language learners are exposed to a very little amount of the target language input where language is practiced in the classroom only, leaving them with a limited reservoir of vocabulary. As a result, when students write, they struggle hard for the appropriate words. In their attempt to pick up these

words, they consult the dictionary and pick and use any word that they think is contextually appropriate.

The results of the present study along with those of Ferris (1995), Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994), and McCurdy (1992) indicate that EFL and ESL writing teachers are more likely to focus on ideas and organization in their written feedback than they did in the past despite the fact that they still pay a great deal of attention to grammar. This shows that there is a shift in the priorities of writing teachers which they try to convey to their students.

To answer the fourth question, "How much attention did students pay to the comments and corrections on content/ideas, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics?", frequencies and percentages of students' level of attention to the instructor's corrections and comments on these five writing features in the three drafts, were calculated. Table 7 presents the findings.

Table 7: Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to instructor's comments on the three drafts.

Item	Draft	Statistics	Not Applicable	None	A little	Some	A lot	Total
Content/ideas?	First	N	1		3	7	25	36
		%	2.8		8.3	19.4	69.4	100.0
	Second	N	1		2	10	23	36
		%	2.8		5.6	27.8	63.9	100.0
	Final	N	1		3	9	23	36
		%	2.8		8.3	25.0	63.9	100.0
Organization?	First	N	1		3	13	19	36
		%	2.8		8.3	36.1	52.8	100.0
	Second	N	1		2	12	21	36
		%	2.8		5.6	33.3	58.3	100.0
	Final	N	1		1	12	22	36
		%	2.8		2.8	33.3	61.1	100.0
Grammar?	First	N	1	1	4	4	26	36
		%	2.8	2.8	11.1	11.1	72.2	100.0
	Second	N	1	1	1	11	22	36
		%	2.8	2.8	2.8	30.6	61.1	100.0
	Final	N	1		4	5	26	36
		%	2.8		11.1	13.9	72.2	100.0
word Choice?	First	N	1	1	4	12	18	36
		%	2.8	2.8	11.1	33.3	50.0	100.0
	Second	N	1	1	5	14	15	36
		%	2.8	2.8	13.9	38.9	41.7	100.0
	Final	N	1	1	3	8	23	36
		%	2.8	2.8	8.3	22.2	63.9	100.0
(Mechanics) like spelling, punctuation, etc.?	First	N	1	1	3	11	20	36
		%	2.8	2.8	8.3	30.6	55.6	100.0
	Second	N	1	1	3	12	19	36
		%	2.8	2.8	8.3	33.3	52.8	100.0
	Final	N	2	2	2	10	20	36
		%	5.6	5.6	5.6	27.8	55.6	100.0

Table 7 shows that there were statistical differences between the mean ranks of the students' level of

attention to the instructor's comments on the five writing features in each of the three drafts.

Table 8: Differences between students' responses to comments

Item	Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	N	Test Statistics ^(a)		
							25th	50th (Median)	75th			Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Content/ideas?	First	36	4.53	0.878	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.06	36	0.565	2	0.754
	Second	36	4.50	0.845	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.99				
	Final	36	4.47	0.878	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.96				

Item	Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	N	Test Statistics ^(a)		
							25th	50th (Median)	75th			Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Organization?	First	36	4.36	0.867	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.93	36	0.877	2	0.645
	Second	36	4.44	0.843	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.00				
	Final	36	4.50	0.811	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.07				
Grammar?	First	36	4.47	1.000	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.00	36	0.129	2	0.938
	Second	36	4.44	0.909	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.97				
	Final	36	4.53	0.910	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.03				
word Choice?	First	36	4.25	0.967	1	5	4.00	4.50	5.00	1.96	36	3.564	2	0.168
	Second	36	4.14	0.961	1	5	4.00	4.00	5.00	1.86				
	Final	36	4.42	0.967	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.18				
(Mechanics) like spelling, punctuation,... etc.?	First	36	4.33	0.956	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.06	36	0.464	2	0.793
	Second	36	4.31	0.951	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.00				
	Final	36	4.22	1.149	1	5	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.94				

Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three-Related Samples was used to uncover the significance of these differences. The findings did not reveal any significant differences at all between the three drafts, as presented in Table 8.

Although the differences were not significant, more students paid a lot of attention to comments on certain writing aspects, namely, organization and word choice in the final drafts even though they knew they were not going to rewrite them. This finding seems quite surprising, and contradicts most of the findings of the previous studies cited above where more attention was paid to comments on the preliminary drafts (first and second) than to those on the final draft.

In general, students are attentive to all comments even to those on the final drafts. This indicates that they are interested in all the instructor's comments on all the drafts, and consider those on final drafts as important and beneficial to them as the ones on the first and second ones although they know that they are not going to respond to these comments in subsequent drafts.

Student writers were asked to respond to the fifth question, *What did they do after reading their instructor's comments and corrections? (e.g., Did they ask the teacher for help?, Did they make corrections themselves?, Did they ask friends for help?, Did they check a grammar book?, Did they think about/remember their mistakes, and did they check a dictionary?)*. Frequencies and percentages of the students' responses were computed and are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to instructor's comments on the three drafts.

Strategies	Draft	Yes	
		N	%
*Ask teacher for help	First	32	88.9
	Second	28	77.8
	Final	21	58.3
*Make corrections myself	First	28	77.8
	Second	31	86.1
	Final	34	94.4
*Ask friends for help	First	19	52.8
	Second	19	52.8
	Final	13	36.1
Check grammar book	First	12	33.3
	Second	11	30.6
	Final	14	38.9
Think about / remember mistakes	First	33	91.7
	Second	33	91.7
	Final	32	88.9
Check Dictionary	First	28	77.8
	Second	25	69.4
	Final	23	63.9

Table 9 reveals that there were statistical differences between the mean ranks of the students' reaction to their instructor's comments and corrections on the five writing features in each of the three drafts.

Table 10: Differences between the mean ranks of the correction strategies chosen by students

Item	Draft	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Percentiles			Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^(a)			
							25th	50th (Median)	75th		N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Ask teacher for help?	First	36	1.89	0.319	1	2	2	2	2	2.21	36	13.286	2	* 0.001
	Second	36	1.78	0.422	1	2	2	2	2	2.04				
	Final	36	1.58	0.500	1	2	1	2	2	1.75				
Make corrections myself?	First	36	1.78	0.422	1	2	2	2	2	1.88	36	7.714	2	* 0.021
	Second	36	1.86	0.351	1	2	2	2	2	2.00				
	Final	36	1.94	0.232	1	2	2	2	2	2.13				
Ask friends for help?	First	36	1.53	0.506	1	2	1	2	2	2.10	36	8.909	2	* 0.012
	Second	36	1.53	0.506	1	2	1	2	2	2.10				
	Final	36	1.33	0.535	0	2	1	1	2	1.81				
Check grammar book?	First	36	1.33	0.478	1	2	1	1	2	1.99	36	1.167	2	0.558
	Second	36	1.31	0.467	1	2	1	1	2	1.94				
	Final	36	1.39	0.494	1	2	1	1	2	2.07				
Think about/remember mistakes?	First	36	1.92	0.280	1	2	2	2	2	2.01	36	0.400	2	0.819
	Second	36	1.92	0.280	1	2	2	2	2	2.01				
	Final	36	1.89	0.319	1	2	2	2	2	1.97				
Check Dictionary?	First	36	1.78	0.422	1	2	2	2	2	2.11	36	5.429	2	0.066
	Second	36	1.69	0.467	1	2	1	2	2	1.99				
	Final	36	1.64	0.487	1	2	1	2	2	1.90				

* $P < 0.05$ (Friedman Three-Related Sample Test)

Friedman's Nonparametric Test for Three-Related Samples was used to uncover the significance of these differences. It was found that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the three drafts in three aspects of assistance: *asking teacher for help, making corrections by the students themselves, and asking friends for help*, as displayed in Table 10. The results showed that students were more likely to seek the instructor's and friends' assistance in responding to comments on the first than on the second draft and on the second more than on the final draft. On the other hand, students said that they made more of the corrections themselves on the final draft than on the second and on the second more than on the first one.

We can say that the most important correction strategies, which students used to address in each of the three drafts, were *asking teacher for help, making corrections themselves, and asking friends for help*. Interestingly, the number of students who made corrections themselves was higher in the final draft than in the second and first drafts and even higher than that found in Ferris's (1995) study.

This finding indicates that as students get involved in writing multiple drafts, they become more aware of their writing errors, more convinced of the necessity of correcting them by themselves, more familiar with helping resources and, consequently, become less dependent on their instructor for correcting their errors.

As for the sixth question, "*Were there ever any problems that students had with their instructor's feedback (e.g. problems in word choice, understanding but sometimes disagree, being unable to read their instructor's handwriting, comments on ideas or organization, grammar terms, abbreviations, and symbols, questions that are too general/too specific, correction symbols which are not clear)*", the study revealed that 55.6% of student writers had problems understanding their instructor's comments. Percentages and frequencies of responses to these problems were calculated, and ranks were ordered in Table 11.

Table 11: Frequencies, and percentages of problems students faced in their instructor's feedback.

Problems	Rank	Yes	
		#	%
Word choice	1	15	41.7
Understand but sometimes disagree	2	10	27.8
Can't read teacher's handwriting	3.5	8	22.2
Comments on ideas or organization	3.5	8	22.2
Grammar terms, abbreviations, and symbols	5	4	11.1
Questions that are too general/too specific	6.5	2	5.6
Correction symbols are not clear	6.5	2	5.6

Table 11 shows that "*word choice*" was the most frequently recurring problem, "*understanding but*

sometimes disagreeing" ranked second, both "being unable to read teacher's handwriting," and "comments on ideas or organization had the same rank, "grammar terms, abbreviations, and symbols" came in the fifth place, and, finally, "questions that are too general/too specific," and "correction symbols that are not clear" were the least recurring problems, bearing in mind that all the percentages were below 50%.

Although the results revealed that more than 50% of the students reported that they had problems understanding their instructor's comments, it should be mentioned that the survey did not ask them whether they always had problems with their instructor's feedback, but rather if they ever did. That is, a student who faced only one problem in one draft over the whole semester would be considered among those 50%. Taking this into account, one can say that this finding seems encouraging that nearly half of the students reported that they never had problems understanding their instructor's comments.

Word choice is the most difficult writing obstacle to most Arab EFL students because when they try to express themselves in English, they think in Arabic and translate their ideas into English using the English-Arabic dictionary, which often results in mistranslation and selecting the wrong word or the nonequivalent English term or expression. This difficulty is illustrated in some of the students' responses including: "I look for the meaning of words in the dictionary and use them as they are in the dictionary, but to my surprise, when the instructor returns the drafts, I discover that he marked them wrong," "most of my errors have to do with choosing the appropriate word; I have to translate the words into Arabic, then I use them in writing, which often results in choosing the wrong words". Another reason could be that the majority of students, as they told me, rarely read English books, magazines, newspapers, or even watch English TV programs which could improve their language proficiency. In other words, EFL students have little access to the target language, and, accordingly, have a limited output. Research on reading and writing has proved that reading is very much related to writing; a good reader is almost a good writer.

In responding to the seventh question, *What did they do with those comments or corrections they did not understand?* (e.g. *Did they ask the instructor for help?*, *Did they look corrections up in a grammar book or dictionary?*, *Did they ask friends/classmates/family for help?*, *Did they try to fix them themselves?*, students reported that the strategies they preferred to use most in responding to comments were: *asking the instructor to explain his comments* and *students trying to correct mistakes by themselves*, which had the students' top priority, while *asking friends/classmates/family for help* was the least used strategy. Table 12 presents the findings.

Table 12: Frequencies, and percentages of correcting strategies used by students in responding to their instructor's feedback

Strategies	Rank	#	%
Ask your instructors to explain them?	1.5	30	83.3
Try to correct mistakes by myself?	1.5	30	83.3
Look corrections up in a grammar book or dictionary?	3	12	33.3
Ask friends/classmates/family for help?	4	14	38.9

Although students gave equal importance to the two strategies, the *instructor's help* and *their dependence on themselves* in responding to their instructor's comments, we can claim that students have become more dependent on themselves in tackling their own writing problems, which is a good indication of the high level of interaction between the instructor and his students. In other words, students have realized the importance of their instructor's feedback and feel that this feedback helps them in their writing.

Regarding the eighth question, *"Were any of the instructor's following comments positive: comments on grammar/vocabulary, comments on content/ideas, comments on organization/rhetorical structure, and the instructor's focus on the introduction and conclusion, they are all positive because they are all helpful,"* 97.2% of the students said that they received positive comments.

Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to this question were calculated and ranks were ordered, as can be seen in Table 13. This table shows that the comment, *They are all positive because they are all helpful*, had the top ranking, *comments on language (grammar, vocabulary, or writing)*, ranked second, and *comments on content/ideas*", ranked third, bearing in mind that the students who said that these comments were positive were equal to or above 50%.

Table 13: Frequencies, and percentages of students' evaluation of their instructor's comments

Comments	Rank	Statistic	
		#	%
They all positive because they are all helpful...	1	27	75.0
Comments on grammar/ vocabulary/ writing...	2	23	63.9
Comments on content / ideas...	3	18	50.0
Comments on Organization/ rhetorical structure...	4	15	41.7
Instructor's focus on the introduction and conclusion.	5	1	2.8

In general, this means that all the instructor's comments or corrections on students' papers were very

positive and were welcomed despite the fact that some comments, particularly, those on *organization/rhetorical structure and on introduction and conclusion*, received below 50%. Although students felt that most of their instructor's feedback was on grammar and that they paid more attention to grammar corrections, half of them still considered comments on ideas/content positive (50%).

At the end of question 8, students were asked to provide any other comments concerning their instructor's feedback. Many of the comments were encouraging, and this indicates that students were interested in such comments, which had a great impact on their writing abilities. The following are examples of the students' reaction to the instructor's comments: "Because my instructor's comments were positive, I was able to improve my writing abilities", "The comments on the drafts were very important because they enabled me to write coherent, cohesive, unified, and complete paragraphs", "Whenever I start writing, I always remember my instructor's comments which often motivate me to write effectively". "I ask all the writing teachers to use this way of teaching writing, multiple drafts as it helps students to improve their writing".

As far as the ninth question is concerned, "*Did any of the instructor's comments and corrections help students improve their composition writing skills? Why or why not?*", the response to this question was overwhelmingly positive. 97% of the students felt that the instructor's feedback helped them improve their writing skills because it made them decide what to improve or avoid in the future, think more clearly/find more ideas, and know where their mistakes were. However, 3% reported that the comments did not help them improve their writing skill because the comments were too negative and discouraging, they needed more help to correct their errors, and some of these comments helped and others did not.

Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to this question were computed and ranks were ordered, as displayed in Table 14.

Table 14: Frequencies, and percentages of students' reasons of the usefulness of the feedback

Reasons	Rank	Statistics	
		#	%
I know what to avoid/improve next time...	1.5	32	88.9
Helps me to improve my writing skills...	1.5	32	88.9
Helps me to think more clearly/make more sense/find more ideas...	3	29	80.6
I know where my mistakes are...	4	26	72.2
I respect my instructor's opinion...	5	25	69.4
Helps me to get better grades/pass essay exams...	6.5	23	63.9
Challenges me to try new things...	6.5	23	63.9
Good comments build my confidence...	8	17	47.2

This table shows that the reasons "*I know what to avoid/improve next time*", and "*it helps me to improve my writing skills*" were the most important reasons claimed for improving students' writing performance, "*it helps me to think more clearly/make more sense/find more ideas*" ranked third, "*I know where my mistakes are*" fourth, "*I respect my instructor's opinion*" fifth, "*it helps me to get better grades/pass essay exams*", and "*challenges me to try new things*", sixth, taking into consideration that students who provided these reasons were over 50%. However, the reason, "*good comments build my confidence*", which had the least rank, got below 50% of the students' acceptance. In general, the students' evaluation of their instructor's feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Students were asked to provide their own comments on their instructor's feedback. The majority of them seem to respect their instructor's opinions and appreciate his efforts and dedication as is demonstrated by the following comments: "My instructor's feedback encouraged me to read English books, newspapers, and magazines"; "It helped me to organize my ideas". It helped me express myself clearly and concisely"; "Sometimes, I was frustrated because of the high number of errors in my drafts, but later on, this method enabled me to organize and improve my writing"; "Before taking this course, I did not know how to write a good paragraph"; "At the beginning of the semester, I thought of dropping the writing course because I was not good at writing, but I changed my mind later on because the instructor's too many comments on my drafts helped me understand how to write a good piece of writing".

In responding to the tenth and eleventh questions, "*How would students rate themselves as learners?*" and "*How would they rate their skills in writing compositions?*", students rated themselves as learners and writers, on a four-point scale (Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent). More than half of the students considered themselves good learners (61.1%) and good writers (55.6%). While this indicates that the majority of EFL students in this study had both good learning and writing abilities, ESL students in Ferris's (1995) study had better abilities in learning the language than in writing it.

Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, many L1 studies that investigated students' reactions to their instructors' feedback have reported that students' responses were not promising; students misunderstand and disagree with their instructors' comments. This study, like earlier studies of ESL students' reaction to their instructors' comments, showed that EFL writing students attend to their instructor's comments and pay a lot of attention to them. Regarding the impact of multiple drafts on students' reactions to the instructor's feedback, this study arrived at the following findings:

1. There were significant differences between students' reactions to the three drafts. Students were more likely to read over again their first draft than the second and the second more than the final one (Question 1). However, no significant differences were found between reactions to the drafts, but if the *all* and *most* categories were combined, we find that students paid more attention to comments on the first and second drafts than the final one (Question 2).
2. There were significant differences between the three drafts in three writing features: word choice, grammar, and mechanics. Students reported receiving more comments on word choice, grammar, and mechanics in the first draft than in the second and in the second more than in the final drafts. Word choice seems to have received the most comments followed by grammar, mechanics, content, and organization (Question 3).
3. No significant differences were found between the three drafts regarding the instructor's feedback on content/ideas, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics.. Surprisingly, a lot of attention was paid to comments on organization, grammar, and word choice in the final drafts although students know that they will not revise and rewrite these drafts (Question 4).
4. The most important strategies, which students adopted in responding to their instructor's comments, *were asking their instructor and friends for help, and making the corrections themselves*. There were significant differences between the three drafts. Students were more dependent on their instructor and friends in correcting comments on the first and second drafts, while they became more self-dependent in the final. The two strategies that students paid the most attention to were *asking instructor for help and correcting mistakes by themselves* (Questions 5 and 7).
5. More than half of the students reported having problems in understanding their instructor's comments. The most recurring problem which students faced was *word choice*, and the least recurring one was *correcting symbols that are not clear* (Question 6).
6. The vast majority of students welcomed the instructor's comments and said that they were positive and helpful (Question 8).
7. Most students reported that their instructor's comments helped them develop their writing skills because these comments enabled them to know what to develop or avoid in the future; they thought more carefully, found more ideas, and knew where their mistakes were (Question 9).
8. Although students reported receiving more comments and paying more attention to grammar, they claimed that they received many comments on content, and that they took such feedback seriously.

From my experience as a writing teacher, I can say that if students take their instructor's written and oral feedback seriously, this will be of a great help to them in revising and improving their writing. Although this study does not investigate the relationship between the instructor's feedback and students' improvement in writing, it indicates that students pay more attention to comments on the first and second drafts. This matches with L1 and L2 findings that the instructor's comments on the first and second drafts may be more beneficial than those on the final one (Hillocks, 1986; Leki, 1990, 1991). However, this does not mean that comments on the final draft are not effective. As mentioned before, many students in this study reported that they paid more attention to comments on some writing features such as grammar, word choice, and organization in the final draft than those in the preliminary drafts.

Pedagogical Implications

In this study, EFL students reported facing problems in understanding their instructor's comments. This problem also faces L1 students; "even in a course with an enlightened, process-oriented teacher, the students may still misinterpret the teacher's comments" (Cohen, 1987, p. 98). This suggests that EFL writing instructors should explain the philosophy of the multiple-draft approach to students early in the semester and the correction symbols or the terminology used in the course. This can be supported by clarifying the misinterpreted comments to the class and encouraging students to ask questions about the comments they have not understood through a teacher-student conference.

Although the instructor/ researcher explained the philosophy behind multiple drafts writing in this study, students still had problems in understanding some of his comments. "Even in a course with an enlightened, process-oriented teacher, the students may still misinterpret the teacher's comments" (Cohen, 1987, p. 58). After each draft, a teacher-student conference was made in order to give the opportunity for all students to ask about the comments they received on their drafts. However, some students hesitated to make that conference because they felt embarrassed about their errors, and they did not want their classmates to know about their mistakes, on the one hand, and they feared the instructor's criticism, on the other. This suggests that writing instructors should not be critical; rather they should encourage all students to make such conferences where students realize that they are not to be criticized for their writing errors, but to be guided and directed toward making use of these errors and improving their writing.

Future Research

Although Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) examined the relationship between students' reactions to their teachers' feedback and the actual responding behavior of teachers in a single-draft context, this study should be replicated to include a large number of students in

various EFL writing environments, especially in the Arab World. This research could be extended to investigate the connection between students' preferences and their error-correction strategies, on the one hand, and their overall writing improvement, on the other, as piloted by Cohen (1987) and suggested by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994).

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Appendix

Composition Survey

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

Drafts	All of it	Most of it	Some of it	None of it
First				
Second				
Final				

2. How many of the instructor's comments and corrections do you think about carefully?

Drafts	All of it	Most of it	Some of it	None of it
First				
Second				
Final				

3. How many of the comments and corrections involve:

First draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None
Content/Ideas				
Organization				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)				

Second draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None
Content/Ideas				
Organization				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)				

Final draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None
Content/Ideas				
Organization				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)				

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

First draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None	Not applicable
Content/Ideas					
Organization					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)					

Second draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None	Not applicable
Content/Ideas					
Organization					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)					

Final draft

Writing Aspects	A lot	Some	Little	None	Not applicable
Content/Ideas					
Organization					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling)					

5. Describe what you do after you read your instructor's comments and corrections, Do you

	First draft		Second draft		Final draft	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ask instructor for help?						
Make corrections yourself?						
Ask friend for help?						
Check grammar book?						
Think about/remember mistakes?						
Check dictionary?						

6. Are there ever any mistakes or corrections that you do not understand? For example

	Yes	No
Can't read instructor's handwriting		
Understand but sometimes disagree		
Grammar terms, abbreviations, and symbols		
Word choice		
Comments on ideas and organization		
Questions that are too general/too specific		

Comments: _____

7. What do you do about those comments or corrections that you do not understand? Do you

	Yes	No
Ask your instructor to explain them?		
Look corrections up in a grammar book or dictionary?		
Ask friends/ classmates/ family for help?		
Try to fix it yourself?		

Comments: _____

8. Are any of your instructor's comments positive? For example

	Yes	No
They are all positive because they are all helpful		
Comments on content/ideas		
Comments on organization/rhetorical structure		
Comments on grammar/vocabulary/writing		

Comments: _____

9. Do you feel that your instructor's comments and corrections help you to improve your composition writing skills? Why or why not?

Yes, because	No, because
----I know what to avoid/improve next time	----- I need more help to correct my mistakes
----I know where my mistakes are	----- Some help, some don't
----Helps me to improve my writing skills	----- Instructor's comments and corrections are too negative and discouraging
----Helps me to think more clearly/make more sense	
----Good comments build my confidence	
---- Helps me to get better grades/pass essay exams	
---- I respect my instructor's opinion	
---- Challenges me to try new things	

Comments: _____

10. How would you rate yourself as a learner? Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor ___

11. How would you rate your skills in writing composition? Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor ___