

Students' Attitudes towards Teacher Written Feedback: A Case Study of Chinese Secondary Vocational School

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Abstract

This study aimed 1) to explore Chinese EFL students' attitudes towards teacher written feedback; 2) to examine which type of teacher written feedback students believe is most helpful in improving their writing. The research used a mixed method to combine quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. A case study was conducted in a vocational school in Guangdong province, China. The study involved 200 questionnaire respondents and eight volunteer students for semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire data analysis indicated that students had a positive attitude towards the teacher written feedback (\bar{X} = 4.40/S.D.=0.72) and a high level of satisfaction with the usefulness of written feedback (\bar{X} = 4.43/S.D.=0.71). In addition, the findings revealed that students believed the positive type of teacher written feedback (\bar{X} = 4.52/S.D.=0.72) was most helpful in improving their English writing. Furthermore, the results of the interviews with students indicated that EFL students liked positive feedback and expected more written feedback from teachers. Further implications and suggestions are also discussed in this article.

Keywords: Students' Attitudes, Teacher Written Feedback, Chinese EFL Students

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เจตคติของนักเรียนที่มีต่อข้อเสนอแนะที่เป็นลายลักษณ์อักษรของครู กรณีศึกษาโรงเรียนอาชีวศึกษาจีนระดับมัธยมศึกษา

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) สำรวจเจตคติผู้เรียนชาวจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ เกี่ยวข้องกับการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครู 2) ตรวจสอบรูปแบบการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครูที่ผู้เรียนเชื่อว่าจะเกิดประโยชน์สูงสุดที่จะช่วยให้ผู้เรียนพัฒนาการเขียนได้ การวิจัยดำเนินการโดยใช้การวิจัยผสมรูปแบบ โดยรวมการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณด้วยการสำรวจ และการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพด้วยการสัมภาษณ์ โดยดำเนินการกับกรณีศึกษาที่เป็นโรงเรียนอาชีวศึกษาแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดกวางตง สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน การศึกษานี้เก็บข้อมูลจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 200 คน และผู้เรียนที่สมัครใจในการเข้าร่วมการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างจำนวน 8 คน ผลจากการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลแบบสอบถามพบว่า ผู้เรียนมีเจตคติเชิงบวกต่อการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครู (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.40/ค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.72) และความพอใจในประโยชน์ที่ได้จากการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครูอยู่ในระดับสูง (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.43/ค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.71) นอกจากนี้ยังพบอีกว่า ผู้เรียนเชื่อว่าการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนเชิงบวกของครูเป็นประโยชน์ในการช่วยพัฒนาการเขียนของเขา (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.52/ค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.72) ผลจากการสัมภาษณ์ผู้เรียนพบว่าผู้เรียนขอการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับเชิงบวกและคาดหวังว่าจะได้รับการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครูเพิ่มขึ้น ในบทความนี้จะมีการอภิปรายเพิ่มเติมถึงข้อเสนอแนะในการนำผลการวิจัยไปใช้

คำสำคัญ เจตคติของผู้เรียน, การให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับในการเขียนของครู,
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Introduction

Writing is considered one of the four most basic skills for students who are learning English. Writing is critical for improving other language acquisition skills in an educational context (Silva & Matsuda, 2000). Teachers and students have given great attention to English writing, but cultivating students' English writing abilities has always been a challenge in education (Yang et al., 2006). Most students believe that English writing is a difficult task and that their writing quality is low (Tsai, 2020).

In general, poor writing performance may be due to a lack of writing skills. However, one potential reason for the poor writing performance of students is teacher written feedback. Educators and academics are very interested in finding the best ways to provide feedback on the written work of students (McMartin-Miller, 2014). Teacher written feedback has always been used as a bridge of communication between teachers and students, and its importance in language learning is undoubted (Mahfoodh, 2017). Effective feedback helps second language learners discover their problems and improves the quality of language learning. From the perspective of language acquisition, the teacher feedback on the learner's output is crucial in the learner's second language learning because this feedback can replace the learner's original incorrect assumptions about the target language with correct language knowledge (Hyland, 2013). Both teachers and students acknowledge that providing written feedback is advantageous, even if it takes time, and teachers should strive to provide it effectively and efficiently (Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2004; Lee, 2011). Saragih et al. (2021) pointed out that providing written feedback is crucial for students to improve their writing skills. Many studies have reached a consensus on one issue: second language learners generally value written feedback provided by teachers and are aware of the beneficial role of teacher written feedback (e.g., Ferris, 2010; Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011; Robinson et al., 2013; Han, 2017; Ouahidi & Lamkhanter, 2020).

In recent years, many studies on teacher written feedback have found that even when effective feedback is provided, students' writing skills do not improve as expected because the written feedback students receive from teachers does not meet their expectations (Mahfoodh, 2017). However, student development is the ultimate goal of teaching, so students play a vital role in the feedback process. To ensure that teacher written feedback is effective, it must be organized and delivered in a way that encourages active student participation (Havnes et al., 2012). However, many related studies (e.g., Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Alvira, 2016; Saidon et al., 2018; Lee, 2019) focus on the perspectives and insights of the

teachers. Researchers emphasized the need to examine the attitudes of the second language learners themselves towards teacher written feedback (Hyland, 1998; Värlander, 2008; Dowden et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2013). Harris et al. (2014) noted that while some data existed about what students wanted from feedback, attitudes toward received feedback had been largely ignored. However, successful language learning depends not only on the cognitive abilities of the learners but also on their attitudes, so student attitudes should not be ignored when discussing second language learning (Horwitz, 1995). Robinson et al. (2013) suggested that future research on feedback in higher education should focus on students' overall attitudes toward teacher written feedback. Dowden et al. (2013) stated that it is also critical to understand how the attitudes of L2 learners affect teacher written feedback. Accordingly, written feedback can be evaluated based on the attitudes of students and compared with teacher written feedback. It is believed that attitudes can affect the acquisition and learning of the students (Hyland, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to study the attitudes and reactions of the learners to teacher written feedback.

Second language learners have a common understanding of teacher written feedback, and they believe it is both helpful and beneficial for language learning. However, they differ in many aspects, including personality, educational background, language level, and motivation for learning. Accordingly, when asked which type of written feedback they preferred and what type of teacher feedback they thought was most helpful to their language ability, their answers varied. Due to this, many studies on the attitudes of students toward teacher written feedback have reached different conclusions. Chandler (2003) found that most students believed that teachers' direct revision of compositions was most helpful to them, while Jamalinesari et al. (2015) showed that students preferred teachers to use indirect feedback types. Empirical research by Radecki and Swales (1988) showed that students are more willing to receive feedback that is more form-focused than content-focused. Ferris (2002) found in his research that students believe that teacher written feedback on content is necessary and valuable. Lee (2008) found that high-level learners prefer negative and critical feedback types, while low-level learners prefer positive feedback. In fact, the relationship between teacher written feedback and second language learners is reciprocal. Specifically, teacher written feedback can affect the development of the writing skills of learners, and their attitudes towards teacher written feedback can also affect the effectiveness of that feedback; this means that their attitude affects the use of teacher written feedback by the learners (Mahfoodh, 2017). Individual differences between different students, changes in the same

student's language proficiency over time, and students' attitudes toward teacher written feedback require teachers to adjust feedback strategies in a timely manner when evaluating the writing of the students to try to cater for their expectations. Therefore, understanding students' attitudes toward teacher written feedback should include understanding the perceptions of the students themselves of teacher written feedback types.

Fithriani (2017) mentioned that teacher written feedback can help improve the writing ability and quality of students, encourage their critical thinking, and promote their autonomy. Leaph (2011) explained that teacher written feedback is used as a trigger for students to create better writing in the future. Magno and Amarles (2011) suggested that teachers should continue to provide written feedback on students' writing, which has been shown to be useful to students. Previous research has shown that teacher written feedback does play an important role in improving students' writing skills and that giving frequent feedback is the best way to achieve successful writing. Clearly, providing students with written feedback is crucial for students to improve their writing skills and is a fundamental aspect of the ESL or EFL writing classroom. Researchers cannot deny that students need feedback and teachers have an obligation to provide that feedback. Without understanding student attitudes toward teacher written feedback, instructors may run the risk of continually using counterproductive strategies.

Some studies noted that the attitudes of second language students towards teacher written feedback are generally positive (Radecki & Swales, 1988; Enginarlar, 1993; Zacharias, 2007; Parr & Timperley, 2010). Although there is a growing body of research on teacher written feedback in a second language, most studies have been conducted in first and second-language contexts (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Furneaux et al., 2007; Ellis, 2009; Magno & Amarles, 2011; Listiani, 2017; Chong, 2019; Bonsu, 2021). Research by Parr and Timperley (2010) indicated that second language writers need written feedback, especially due to the challenges of L1 interference and limited understanding of the second language. Ruegg (2015) stated that the second language is an important medium for ESL learners' daily communication and is closely linked to their survival and development. ESL learners must apply their second language writing skills to real life, so they pay more attention to language expression and fluency. However, the short-term goal of EFL learners in learning a foreign language is often to successfully pass an exam, so they regard second language writing as a form of language practice and focus on formal feedback such as grammar and vocabulary rather than content. Due to differences in learners' living environments and learning

motivations, there is no doubt that there are differences between ESL learners and the attitudes of EFL learners towards teacher written feedback. However, in the context of English as a foreign language, there are relatively few studies focusing on the attitudes and preferences of English learners towards teacher written feedback (Chiang, 2004; Grami, 2005; Diab, 2005).

Since contextual factors have always played a vital role in shaping student attitudes, for a group of Chinese learners who learn English as a foreign language, it is important to conduct research on teacher written feedback in the Chinese context. For English writing teaching in China, research on teacher written feedback in the EFL context has more direct guiding significance. Cahyani and Murtafi'ah (2022) stated that teacher written feedback has a great impact on the writing skills of students, especially for learners of English as a foreign language, who occasionally make mistakes in their writing. Therefore, the Chinese learner group in the EFL context needs this kind of feedback to improve their writing and to correctly convey the information contained in their writing to readers. Chiang (2004) suggested that further research be conducted in the EFL context to assist teachers in giving more effective written feedback to students. In addition, in the EFL context, almost all studies on teacher written feedback on the attitudes of students in China have been conducted in senior high school or college settings, while studies in the vocational school context have not been widely explored by Chinese scholars in the field. In particular, there are few studies on teacher written feedback for secondary vocational students. Therefore, studying the attitudes of secondary vocational students towards teacher written feedback in the EFL context can enrich Chinese research in this field and promote the further development of research on teacher written feedback in China. Based on the above background, the researchers sought to understand secondary vocational students' attitudes toward teacher written feedback. This research aims to help secondary vocational teachers better understand student perceptions of teacher written feedback, in order to provide students with feedback that is more in line with their expectations during the writing feedback process. This should enhance the role of teacher written feedback and enable secondary vocational students to truly benefit from feedback and improve their writing. Based on the research purpose, this study designed the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the attitudes of students towards teacher written feedback?

RQ2: Which type of teacher written feedback do students believe is most helpful in improving their writing?

Methodology

A mixed-method research approach was used in this study, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the attitudes of students. The focused quantitative data was collected through questionnaires first. Then, more in-depth qualitative data was collected to supplement the findings from the quantitative data by using semi-structured interviews.

Population and Sample

This research was carried out in a Secondary Vocational School in Guangdong Province, China. A total of 400 students from 8 classes in Grade 12 were the subjects of the study. Based on the chosen calculation method according to the Yamane formula, a sample of 200 was generated by the random sampling method. Eight students from the sample of 200 students were selected as key informants for the semi-structured interview. The criteria for selecting interviewees followed the voluntary principle.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire designed by Lee (2008) was used in this study with some modifications (See Appendix 1). The student questionnaire for this research mainly consisted of 18 questions, which were divided into three parts to answer the two research questions. The first part (Q1-Q3) was designed to understand the basic information of the students. The second part (Q4-Q12) included three sections to summarize the attitudes of the students. The first was based on student understanding of written feedback, which referred to understanding the attitudes of the students from their cognition of teacher written feedback. The second part was the emotional response of the students to teacher written feedback in order to understand their attitudes. If the students' emotions were positive (such as: happy and satisfied), this meant that the attitude was positive. The third section (Q13-Q18) was to understand the attitudes of the students from the reactions of the students after receiving the feedback. The last part of the questionnaire was designed to explore the answer to the second research question.

The questionnaire was bilingual (written in both Chinese and English). Three language experts were invited to evaluate the questionnaire, and two experts who were proficient in Chinese and English translated each item in the questionnaire to ensure that the translated version in Chinese was accurate. All the items were to be measured on a five-point Likert-type scale.

In the study, a semi-structured interview was conducted to gain a better understanding of the students' perceptions of teacher written feedback. To avoid any misunderstanding, the interviews were administered in Chinese, which is the native language of the participants. Before the final week of the semester, eight students voluntarily participated in the interviews. Interviews were conducted individually to obtain more authentic and detailed answers from the interviewees. The duration of individual interviews was approximately 30 minutes. The list of the questions is presented in the Appendix 2.

Validity and Reliability

The content validity of the questionnaire items and semi-structured interview questions was performed by inviting one Thai expert and two Chinese experts. The Index of Item Objective Congruence was used to assess the correspondence of the content of the instruments to the objectives of the study based on the scores +1, 0, and -1. The questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data and the semi-structured interview was used to collect qualitative data after the three experts ensured the content validity of the research instruments through a detailed review of content coverage, relevance, linguistic accuracy, applicability, feedback, and recommendations. Before conducting a formal questionnaire of the 200 students, the researchers conducted a reliability test with a pilot group to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The result of Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.831, which means that the questionnaire was reliable (Wang, 2012). The research was approved for research ethics by the Research Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University before the data collection process began. All the data collection procedures were carefully and strictly performed to ensure that all the research participants were treated ethically.

Data Collection

The researchers administered the questionnaire to 200 respondents and interviewed 8 volunteers. All research activities were approved by the director of the research school.

The questionnaires were issued and data was collected through the data collection software "WEN JUANXING". Students were asked to rate their agreement on a 1-5 scale, with 1 indicating the least agreement and 5 indicating the most agreement. The semi-structured interview data was gathered from 8 volunteer students to explore the attitudes of the students and the type of teacher written feedback which was most helpful for their writing; this was

then transcribed, segmented, and displayed. Before the interview content list was used, the experts conducted the evaluation and checked the content to ensure the validity of the data. The language of the interview was Chinese and all answers to the interview questions were recorded and transcribed into English. The reliability of the data was performed with inter-coders of which the coding reliability was 0.95. This could ensure the reliable results of the qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

A quantitative approach employing descriptive statistics was employed through the analysis of data collected by the data acquisition software “WEN JUANXING.” A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to students and subsequently collected. The researchers used SPSS 26.0 to make statistics and analysis on all the data from the questionnaires. After collating the data, the maximum, minimum, mean, and standard deviation were calculated to summarize the attitudes expressed in the survey.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews was primarily used to supplement the qualitative findings of the research questions. The researchers coded the respondents numerically according to the order of their interview responses (Student Interviewee 1, Student Interviewee 2,). The qualitative analysis software NVIVO was adopted to code, categorize, and conduct the findings. The criteria for the key concept categories of the student interviews were categorized by the researchers according to the attitudes of the students towards the written feedback. Two key concepts for student interviews were 'Positive' and 'Useful'. "Positive" referred to the students' positive evaluation of the written feedback of the teachers from the cognitive dimension, emotional dimension, and behavioral dimension in the interview statement. It was specifically divided into 3 subcategories: Awareness and Emotion for Feedback, Applicable Feedback, and Effectiveness of Feedback. "Useful" meant that the students thought that teacher written feedback was useful for improving writing in interviews, and it was specifically divided into 5 subcategories: Form Improvement, Content Improvement, Direct Correction, Constructive Criticism, and Encouraging Feedback.

Research Results

Items 1/2/3 of the questionnaire were to understand the basic information of students and were concerned with gender, class, and last score in English writing. The 200 participants were 96 male and 104 female students. Male students accounted for 48.26% and female

students accounted for 51.74%, so there were slightly more female students than male. Through the analysis of background data collected by the data acquisition software “WEN JUANXING”, the data collection and analysis of the basic information of the respondents in items 1/2/3 of the questionnaire, the number of participants from different classes was relatively balanced, which lays the foundation for the objectivity and universality of the research data.

Quantitative Findings

Response Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of students towards teacher written feedback?

The answers to the first research question were demonstrated using descriptive statistics summarized in Table 1. The mean \bar{X} and S.D. were computed for all the statements.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Attitudes of Students towards teacher written feedback

Items	N	Min	Max	\bar{X}	S.D.
Q4: I think teacher written feedback is very necessary for English learning.	20 0	1	5	4.45	0.71
Q5: I prefer teacher written feedback to other teacher feedback.	20 0	1	5	4.32	0.80
Q6: I think teacher written feedback has a positive impact on my English writing.	20 0	1	5	4.43	0.71
Q7: I think teacher written feedback can improve my English writing skills and writing ability.	20 0	1	5	4.38	0.68
Total				4.40	0.72
Q8: I value and look forward to receiving written teacher feedback.	20 0	1	5	4.41	0.79
Q9: I think teacher written feedback is useful, receiving teacher written feedback makes me feel very happy and satisfied.	20 0	1	5	4.45	0.63
Total				4.43	0.71

Items	N	Min	Max	\bar{X}	S.D.
Q10: After receiving the teacher written feedback, I can understand all the feedback.	20 0	1	5	3.87	0.84
Q11: I will use the teacher written feedback received to revise my writing.	20 0	1	5	4.21	0.78
Q12: The teacher written feedback I received is always effective in revising my writing.	20 0	1	5	4.02	0.81
Total				4.03	0.81

Table 1 reveals student attitudes towards teacher written feedback. From the perspective of student understanding of written feedback, the highest score on average was $\bar{X}=4.45$, and the lowest score was $\bar{X}=4.32$, while the highest score of S.D. was 0.80 and the lowest score was S.D.=0.68. The average score of $\bar{X}=4.40$ indicated that students agreed with the importance and necessity of teacher written feedback and its positive impact on English writing. Therefore, the analysis results can be understood as showing that students generally had a positive attitude towards written feedback. This average score can be explained by the fact that most students rated the teacher written feedback positively and found it valuable to their learning. If the mean of the standard deviations is S.D. = 0.72, a standard deviation of less than 1 indicates small differences in student attitudes towards written feedback. The higher the standard deviation, the greater the difference in attitudes between students, that is, the greater the dispersion of attitudes toward teacher written feedback. This small difference may be due to different individual differences, learning backgrounds, and cultural backgrounds, among other factors. It showed that overall, the secondary vocational students have a very positive attitude towards written feedback, but a very few students may have different attitudes towards it.

In the analysis of the emotional responses of students to teacher written feedback, the results showed a mean score of 4.43 and a mean standard deviation of 0.71. The mean had a maximum score of $\bar{X} = 4.45$ and a minimum score of $\bar{X}= 4.41$, while S.D. had a maximum score of 0.79 and a minimum score of 0.63. These data provide some information about student emotional responses to teacher written feedback. The average score of $\bar{X}=4.43$ indicates that most students expressed expectations, happiness, and satisfaction with teacher written feedback. This result strongly indicates that students have a very positive attitude

towards teacher written feedback. From this result, it is reasonable to infer that the written feedback students receive is helpful for them to understand their writing performance and to improve their writing skills and level through written feedback. This shows that students are open and receptive to written feedback from teachers. The standard deviation mean was $S.D.=0.71$, which is lower than 1, indicating that there are small differences in students' emotional responses to teacher written feedback. The smaller number of standard deviations means that fewer students differed in their emotional responses to the teacher written feedback. In general, most students are very interested in written feedback, value it, and actively use it to improve their own learning. A very small number of students may have a more negative or indifferent attitude towards feedback and may feel that feedback is not important or cannot really help them improve. The specific reasons need to be explored in the next step of qualitative research.

The average score \bar{X} for student reactions after receiving teacher written feedback was 4.03. The mean of the standard deviation was 0.81. The mean \bar{X} had the highest score of $\bar{X}=4.21$ and the lowest score of $\bar{X}=3.87$, while S.D. had the highest score of 0.84 and the lowest score of 0.78. These data provided information about the reactions of the students after receiving the feedback, and if the reactions were active, student attitudes towards the written feedback were positive. The average score of $\bar{X}=4.03$ indicated that the reactions of most students after receiving the feedback were active, and the students used the feedback to revise their compositions after receiving the feedback, which also showed that most of the students agreed that the feedback received was understandable and effective. The students agreed that the feedback they received helped them better understand their performance and identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This showed that most of the students were satisfied and accepted the feedback received with a positive attitude. In addition, the mean value of 4.03 is lower than the mean value of 4.40 for students' understanding of feedback and lower than the mean value of 4.43 for their emotional responses to feedback. This means that in terms of student reaction, the motivation is lower than the other two. The standard deviation mean is $S.D.=0.81$ indicating that there was minor variation in the reactions of the students receiving the feedback. From the point of view of student reactions after receiving feedback, generally speaking, most students had a positive attitude towards teacher written feedback. Most students valued written feedback and actively used it to revise their writing and improve their writing ability.

Response Research Question 2: Which type of teacher written feedback do students believe is most helpful in improving their English writing?

Different classification standards are used to classify teacher written feedback. Based on the classifications of Eills (2009), some modifications were made to the types of teacher written feedback. As part of this study, teacher written feedback was divided into positive and negative feedback according to the language used in the feedback; based on the content of the feedback, it can be divided into feedback on form and feedback on content; based on the method of feedback, it can be classified as direct feedback or indirect feedback. A detailed classification and description can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Description of types of teacher written feedback.

	Type	Description
1	Positive Feedback	This refers to encouraging feedback provided by teachers for students, such as excellent, good job, fantastic, and so on. More specifically, “You’ve used several compound sentences correctly in your composition. And you have used many concrete examples to illustrate your viewpoint. In addition, your handwriting is good. Well done!”
2	Negative Feedback	This means that teachers focus on the evaluation of students’ mistakes and weaknesses, which makes students lose their interest in learning English. For example, “Your handwriting is so terrible. You should pay more attention to it next time.”
3	Feedback on Form	This mainly refers to the feedback on grammatical errors, such as grammar, vocabulary, and handwriting aiming to improve the accuracy of language usage.
4	Feedback on Content	This refers to the comments and feedback on the content, organization and cohesion of a composition.
5	Direct Feedback	Teachers provide written feedback to students that clearly points out errors in their writing and provides them with correct statements.

	Type	Description
6	Indirect Feedback	Teachers point out writing errors and indicate their location in written feedback to students, or simply mention the existence of the error (without indicating its location), or the teacher points out the error and uses an error code, or the teacher points out the error and attaches a short grammatical explanation. This means that the students should correct the errors by themselves and the teacher's job is only to indicate an error and leave it to the students themselves to deal with it.

The answers to the second research question are demonstrated using descriptive statistics summarized in Table 3. The mean and S.D. were computed for all the statements.

Table 3

Questionnaire of the type of teacher written feedback students believe is most helpful in improving their writing.

Item	N	Min	Max	\bar{X}	S.D.
Q13: Teacher written feedback on form (e.g., punctuation, spelling) has helped my writing most.	200	1	5	4.41	0.76
Q14: Teacher written feedback on form (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) is most helpful in improving my writing.	200	1	5	4.64	0.73
Q15: Teacher written feedback on the content is the most helpful in improving my writing.	200	1	5	4.16	0.76
Q16: Indirect written feedback (just pointing out mistakes without correcting me or giving comments that have nothing to correct) has helped my writing the most.	200	1	5	4.15	0.73

Item	N	Min	Max	\bar{X}	S.D.
Q17: Direct written feedback (correcting all my mistakes or giving detailed corrections) has helped my writing most.	200	1	5	4.87	0.72
Q18: Positive teacher written feedback (encouraging comments or praise) has been most helpful in improving my writing.	200	1	5	4.89	0.62
Total				4.52	0.72

Table 3 provides an overall overview of student perceptions of various types of teacher written feedback. Among them, the highest mean score ($\bar{X}=4.89$) indicated that students expressed a clear preference for the type of positive teacher written feedback over other types of written feedback, which means that students generally believed the positive type of teacher written feedback is most helpful to their English writing. Conversely, the lowest S.D.=0.62 indicated less variance among the scores of the students, which indicates a convergence in their perceptions of positive types of feedback. On the other hand, the lower average score ($\bar{X}=4.15$; S.D.=0.73) indicated that students showed a low agreement on the statement that indirect written feedback (“just pointing out mistakes without helping me correct them or giving some irrelevant corrective comments”) is the most helpful to improve writing. On the contrary, students responded favorably to the type of direct written feedback ($\bar{X}=4.87$; S.D.= 0.72) which students believed was the most helpful to improve their writing. In addition, compared with feedback on content ($\bar{X}=4.16$; S.D.=0.76), students thought that feedback on form (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) was most helpful in improving their writing ($\bar{X}=4.64$; S.D.=0.73).

Qualitative Findings

The opinions of students were analyzed by means of content analysis. The analysis of student interviews was primarily used to supplement the qualitative findings of the research questions. Table 4 below lists the student comments retrieved from the student semi-structured interview survey by the qualitative analysis software NVIVO, and the results are presented by word frequency and percentage.

Table 4

The Frequencies and Percentage of the Student Answers in the Interview using NVIVO

Points		Frequencies of key concepts found in students' answers and percentage (N = 127)
POSITIVE	Awareness and Emotion for Feedback	15 (11.8%)
	Applicable Feedback	10 (7.9%)
	Effectiveness of Feedback	27 (21.3%)
USEFUL	Form Improvement	14 (11%)
	Content Improvement	9 (7.1%)
	Direct Correction	20 (15.7%)
	Constructive Criticism	4 (3.1%)
	Encouraging Feedback	28 (22.1%)

“Awareness and Emotion for Feedback” refers to student understanding of written feedback, emphasizing whether students pay attention to and value written feedback, whether students expect and desire written feedback, and whether students recognize the positive impact of written feedback. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 11.8. All the student respondents expressed the importance of written feedback to English writing, and most students said that written feedback was almost the only channel and tool for them to understand their writing weaknesses and improve their writing skills, and they had a strong dependence on teacher feedback. This is because written feedback helps them understand what they did well and what needs further attention. Almost all students agreed that the teacher written feedback had made a great contribution to their writing learning and improvement, and they generally had a positive attitude towards the teacher feedback.

"I think that written feedback from teachers is an important learning tool. I feel valued and supported when I see my teachers documenting my strengths and areas for improvement in detail. This feedback makes me feel motivated to try to improve my performance." (Student Interviewee 4)

"I am looking forward to and curious about the teacher written feedback. I knew it was an opportunity to see what I had learned, but I was also worried about seeing my

shortcomings. I think the teacher written feedback is very important. It can give me more advice on learning and help me improve my English performance." (Student Interviewee 5)

"It made me feel gratified and supported, and I felt that the teachers really cared about my progress." (Student Interviewee 6)

The applicability of feedback is critical for students to understand teacher comments and apply them effectively. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 7.9. Almost all students thought that the teacher written feedback could be adopted and could help them revise the composition and could give them a steady stream of learning motivation. Almost half of the student respondents emphasized that the written feedback they received could be incorporated into their writing, helping them revise and improve. However, two students were not satisfied with the written feedback they received from teachers. They stated that receiving written feedback from teachers that was vague or did not provide specific details was not helpful in revising and improving their writing.

"Due to the teacher's limited time, she did not give me specific comments but only grades, so it makes me hard to revise my writing." (Student Interviewee 6)

"When the written feedback received is vague criticism and simple sketching, it is difficult for me to understand what the teacher wants to convey and apply it to my writing." (Student Interviewee 8)

"Effectiveness of Feedback" refers to whether students think that the written feedback they receive is effective for them in learning English and improving their writing. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 21.3. According to the responses of the student respondents, effective feedback in this study is considered as written feedback that is easy to understand, points out writing shortcomings, improves writing skills and abilities, and enhances learning motivation. Among the eight students, seven students said that effective feedback helped them have a positive attitude. Through effective feedback, their writing level had been improved to a certain extent, and their confidence in learning English had been enhanced. Only one student expressed a negative attitude.

"I know the feedback will point out where I need to improve, but it will also point out my efforts and achievements. I see feedback as an opportunity to improve my performance." (Student Interviewee 7)

“Form improvement” refers to students' belief that written feedback on the form will allow them to improve. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 11. Most of the student respondents said that most of the written feedback they received was on the form of their writing, which they found acceptable. Almost all students agreed that feedback on form could help them improve their writing quality a lot.

"Most of the written feedback on the form (such as punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) is understandable and easy to revise, which makes me feel confident in revising my writing." (Student Interviewee 1)

"I think feedback on grammar is more useful than feedback on content because I can get higher scores in examinations if I improve grammar." (Student Interviewee 4)

“Content Improvement” refers to the belief of the students that written feedback on the content of their writing will improve their writing ability. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 7.1. While a substantial majority of student respondents indicated a high value for feedback on form, several of them also mentioned that written feedback on the content of writing was also important.

"The content of writing is related to the quality of writing. For an excellent piece of writing, the readability, logic and appreciation of its content must be very strong. Although my writing grades are often excellent, improving the quality of writing content is also my biggest difficulty." (Student Interviewee 2)

“Direct Correction” refers to the problem in students' writing. The teacher directly corrects in the written feedback instead of circling and drawing for students to modify by themselves. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 15.7. In the student interviews, almost all the students expressed the view that they liked the teacher's direct correction. But there was also some disagreement.

"I preferred writing activities to be single-draft rather than multiple-draft, so I can check when received written feedback. I think direct correction is time-saving and trouble-free." (Student Interviewee 3)

"I don't agree that all the revisions should be made by the teacher. I hope that the teacher can point out mistakes or give me suggestions. I like to think about the process of revision by myself so that my writing skills can be really improved." (Student Interviewee 6)

“Constructive Criticism” means that during the written feedback process, the teacher gives criticism and suggestions for revision based on the writing of the students. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 3.1. In the student interviews, half of the respondents expressed a positive attitude towards teacher criticisms and suggestions. They said that in English learning, the teacher was in an authoritative position, and any criticisms and opinions from the teacher were for the purpose of helping students correct their mistakes. However, there were also two students who clearly could not accept all constructive criticism. In the interviews, most of the students acknowledged the importance of criticism but also expressed the need for more encouragement and praise to keep them happy.

"I need to see whether the teacher's criticism is specific, operable or targeted. I care more about whether the feedback I receive can effectively help me revise or improve, and I don't care much about the teacher's criticism or praise." (Student Interviewee 5)

“Encouraging Feedback” refers to the use of encouragement and praise strategies by teachers to students in written feedback. The overall percentage of student interviews mentioning this category was 22.1. All the students interviewed said that as students, they needed more encouragement and affirmation from teachers.

"Encouraging feedback can enhance motivation to learn and develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards writing. This is essential for improving my English skills." (Student Interviewee 2)

In the student interviews, students expressed different expectations for teacher written feedback, and basically all students expected more feedback, more effective feedback, and more positive feedback. In addition, the students greatly valued individualized written feedback that took into consideration their unique strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. All interviewees unanimously agreed that timely feedback positively influenced their learning experience.

"I feel more motivated when teachers acknowledge my individual efforts and tailor their feedback to address my challenges. It makes me believe they genuinely care about my growth." (Student Interviewee 5)

Discussion

The findings showed that the attitudes of most secondary vocational students towards teacher written feedback were generally positive; at the same time, students believed that it was necessary to improve their English writing, and no one thought that teacher written feedback was useless ($\bar{X}=4.40$, S.D.=0.72; $\bar{X}=4.43$, S.D.=0.71; $\bar{X}=4.03$, S.D.=0.81). This was consistent with the study of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter (2020), which showed that students eagerly awaited teacher written feedback, believed that it was extremely valuable, and knew that it affected their writing ability. A similar finding was made by Lee (2008), who found that students found teacher written feedback useful. The findings showed that secondary vocational students believed that teacher written feedback had a positive impact on their English writing and helped improve their writing ($\bar{X}=4.43$, S.D.=0.71; $\bar{X}=4.38$, S.D.=0.68). This is consistent with the research of Treglia (2009), where students recognized the helpfulness of teacher written feedback in improving their English proficiency. In addition, the research results showed that compared with other feedback, such as peer feedback and teacher oral feedback, most students said that they preferred teacher written feedback (Questionnaire Option 5: $\bar{X}=4.32$; S.D.=0.80). This revealed the preferred options of the students for the type of feedback they want to receive when revising their writing in the EFL context. This was in line with previous research (Radecki & Swales, 1988; Zhang, 1995; Chiang, 2004; Diab, 2005). Their research showed that EFL students preferred teacher written feedback as a source of feedback. If the feedback strategies given by teachers do not match student preferences, this will cause student dissatisfaction, reduce student learning motivation, and ultimately have a negative impact on their learning (Brown et al., 2009). Therefore, secondary vocational teachers should provide feedback in a way that students appreciate and which helps EFL learners benefit from the feedback in order to improve their writing.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative research found that students responded positively to teacher written feedback, such as happiness and satisfaction (Questionnaire Option 9: $\bar{X}=4.45$; S.D.=0.63). This was consistent with the findings of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter (2020). In addition, the study found that understandability may be a problem as not all of the secondary vocational students understood the written feedback given by the teacher and revised their writing according to the feedback (Questionnaire Options 10, 11: $\bar{X}=3.87$; S.D.=0.84; $\bar{X}=4.21$, S.D.=0.78). This confirmed previous research showing that the written feedback students received from teachers was not always fully understood (Lee, 2008; Ouahidi & Lamkhanter, 2020). Obviously, the teacher written feedback became less effective when the

student did not understand it. Student attitudes toward teacher written feedback depend on a variety of factors, including the student's language level and motivation, and the quality of the teacher written feedback, such as its legibility. In addition, the findings showed that most students received the kind of teacher written feedback that effectively revised their writings ($\bar{X}=4.02$; S.D.=0.81), which indicated that students were generally satisfied with the teacher written feedback they received. That supported the findings of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter (2020) and Cahyani and Murtafi'ah (2022). Maybe the reason was that the students received written feedback from teachers that was clear, easy to understand, and comprehensive. Consequently, students considered teacher written feedback to be valid and valuable, and they were able to use it to revise their writing. Therefore, secondary vocational teachers should ensure the feedback content is comprehensible when providing written feedback. When the teacher written feedback meets students' expectations, the students will be able to reflect on and revise their writing, so that they can improve their writing.

In addition, the findings showed that teacher-led feedback practices in EFL contexts cultivate passive and dependent learners, which was consistent with the findings of Lee (2008). Belcher and Liu (2004) argued that students preferred to receive more details from teachers, such as being told what to do and how to do it, rather than indirectly guiding themselves to actively explore, which seems to describe the students in the study. According to the qualitative findings, the secondary vocational students believed that the more teacher written feedback the better, and they were very dependent on teacher written feedback; some students even said that they could not revise their writing effectively without the teacher feedback. This indicated that the response of the secondary vocational students in the EFL context towards teacher written feedback was dependent and desired. In other words, it showed that EFL students greatly appreciated and trusted their teachers, and fully trusted the teacher's expertise when teachers provided feedback. The finding was consistent with previous studies (Mahfoodh, 2017; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023). Consequently, vocational teachers can change student attitudes toward teacher written feedback in numerous ways, primarily by asking students to be more proactive in learning how to write, such as telling teachers what they want from their feedback.

In terms of which type of teacher written feedback students believe is most helpful to improve their writing, positive teacher written feedback was found to be the most helpful ($\bar{X}= 4.89$; S.D.=0.62). While Gee (1972) and F. Hyland and K. Hyland (2001) found that positive teacher written feedback did not help students improve their writing, other researchers such

as Daiker (2011) had convincingly argued that positive feedback (e.g., praise, and encouraging comments) is essential for students to successfully revise writing. Positive feedback can help students understand what is good and what does not need to be revised when revising. In addition, Daiker (2011) suggested that when students were praised, they may feel successful, which could in turn motivate them to learn. F. Hyland and K. Hyland (2001) confirmed that positive feedback may help to reinforce appropriate language behavior and develop student self-esteem. Moreover, qualitative findings revealed that all students recognized the importance of positive feedback to their language learning, while negative feedback could lead to negative emotions such as frustration and boredom, thereby hindering their writing improvement. Therefore, a good teacher should consider the emotions of students, encourage them appropriately, and avoid providing negative feedback. In order to motivate students to revise their writing, more positive written feedback should be provided.

In terms of which type of teacher written feedback was most helpful for writing improvement, both quantitative and qualitative results showed that the direct type of teacher written feedback (correcting all my mistakes or giving detailed corrections) was one of the highest outcomes chosen by students (\bar{X} = 4.87; S.D.=0.72). It was consistent with the findings of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter (2020), who described students explicitly stating that direct feedback by the teacher was helpful in improving their writing. This result confirmed that students would like teacher written feedback that avoided confusion and misunderstanding. Mahfoodh and Pandian (2011) supported the need for direct types of feedback, as students in EFL contexts tended to reject teacher feedback that did not explain the reasons behind why errors occur. Previous research (Ferris, 1995; Lee, 2005) also confirmed this view, emphasizing that providing the indirect type of feedback as a feedback strategy was questioned because students were unable to interpret this type of written feedback. The indirect type of written feedback was not enough to guide students to better improve their writing skills. In fact, students wanted to know where there were mistakes and how to correct them effectively to avoid confusion.

The findings showed that most students thought teacher written feedback on form (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) (\bar{X} = 4.64; S.D.=0.73) also helped them improve their writing. The findings were consistent with the results of some earlier research (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ene & Upton, 2014; Ouahidi & Lamkhanter, 2020). Specifically, the findings showed that most students tended to focus more on grammatical errors, and thus students felt that written feedback on form would help them improve their English writing. This differed from the

findings of Chen et al. (2016), which showed that the type of teacher written feedback that most helped students improve their writing was feedback on content. The difference in research results may be due to the different target groups of the research. The research of Chen et al. (2016) focused on college students with an EFL background, whereas this research focused on secondary vocational students with an EFL background. Different levels of students had different language proficiency and learning habits, so different findings were presented. According to Huang (2016), EFL learners focused more on grammatical accuracy. However, in the study of Saidon et al. (2018), teachers paid the least attention to written feedback on form that emphasized grammar. In this study, EFL students showed high expectations for teacher written feedback on form. Nearly all of the students preferred teachers to provide more feedback on form than feedback on content because they believed it would be easier for them to revise and improve their writing if the teacher written feedback focused on form. Therefore, secondary vocational teachers should pay more attention to the needs and preferences of their students for the type of teacher written feedback, and provide students with feedback that is more in line with their expectations to help them learn and improve.

The above research findings were reflected in the EFL context. The previous research emphasized the individual differences in learner preferences for teacher feedback (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1987; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). In other words, the same type of teacher written feedback may produce different responses in different learner groups, and different learners may have different expectations and requirements for feedback types. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) conducted a comparative study on writers in ESL and EFL contexts and found that both groups of learners believed that teacher written feedback was helpful to their writing and showed a positive attitude towards it. However, they had differing opinions and attitudes regarding the details of teacher written feedback. For instance, ESL learners were more likely to receive written feedback from teachers that was specific to the organizational structure and ideas of the writing, and believed that text-oriented feedback was more helpful to improve their writing than grammatical feedback. Comparatively, EFL learners in this study expected teachers to pay more attention to vocabulary, grammar, and other aspects of writing and thought that feedback in this area would be more helpful.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that in this study, more students answered "like" than "dislike" in written feedback from teachers, indicating that Chinese secondary vocational students in the context of EFL had a positive attitude towards written feedback

from their teachers and believed that the type of positive teacher written feedback was most helpful in improving their writing.

Recommendations and limitations

Based on the research results, the attitudes of most participants toward teacher written feedback were positive, receptive, and relatively satisfactory. Students also did not find it difficult to understand the written feedback given by teachers. Additionally, students could more easily use teacher feedback to correct errors in their writing and then continue writing. It can be concluded that teacher written feedback is very useful for student writing improvement. Given the importance of written feedback for students to complete their writing correctly, teachers also need to ensure that the feedback given is fully understood by students. Students prefer positive types of feedback and hope that teachers will not only correct their mistakes directly but also encourage and praise them. Therefore, teachers should give more encouragement and praise when responding to mistakes. Students are more motivated to complete their writing assignments when they receive positive feedback. When giving written feedback on student writing, students are more likely to have formal errors corrected by their teachers. To promote foreign language learning among secondary vocational students, teachers should not ignore student attitudes, because when students feel uneasy and apprehensive about their learning or feel negative about their experience of receiving feedback, they may not be able to use written feedback effectively to improve their writing.

Although this study has achieved certain results through the analysis of questionnaires and interviews, there are still some areas for improvement. First, the study only surveyed participants from one vocational school, so their attitudes towards teacher feedback may not represent secondary vocational students in the city or China as a whole. Furthermore, even though the questionnaires and interviews were carried out in a comfortable setting, and the researchers tried to ensure the validity of their research tools, it is important to note that both instruments rely on self-reports and may be influenced by student emotions and experiences in real-life scenarios. There are many aspects worth studying in the future, which can be explored by researchers from different research objects and research methods. In addition, researchers can also conduct comparative studies on vocational school students from different sources and schools of different natures, such as public schools versus private schools, and rural schools versus urban schools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire For Students

NO.	Personal Information (Please fill in the correct information.)					
1	Class:					
2	Gender:					
3	Last score in English Writing:					
NO.	Questions for Teacher Written Feedback	1	2	3	4	5
4	I think teachers' written feedback is very necessary for English learning.					
5	I prefer teacher written feedback to other teacher feedback.					
6	I think written feedback will have a positive impact on my English writing.					
7	I think teacher written feedback can improve my English writing skills and writing ability.					
8	I value and look forward to receiving written teacher feedback.					
9	I think written feedback is useful, receiving teacher written feedback makes me feel very happy and satisfied.					
10	After receiving teacher written feedback, I can understand all the feedback.					
11	I will use the teacher written feedback received to revise my writing.					
12	The teacher written feedback received is always effective in revising my writing.					
13	Teacher written feedback on form (e.g., punctuation, spelling) has helped my writing most.					
14	Teacher written feedback on form (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) is most helpful in improving my writing.					

NO.	Personal Information (Please fill in the correct information.)					
1	Class:					
2	Gender:					
3	Last score in English Writing:					
NO.	Questions for Teacher Written Feedback	1	2	3	4	5
15	Teacher written feedback on the content is the most helpful in improving my writing.					
16	Indirect written feedback (just pointing out mistakes without correcting me or giving comments that have nothing to correct) has helped my writing most.					
17	Direct written feedback (correcting all my mistakes or giving detailed corrections) has helped my writing most.					
18	Encouraging teacher written feedback has been most helpful in improving my writing.					

Appendix 2

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Students

1. How would you rate your writing proficiency?
2. What was your first impression of the teacher written feedback?
3. How did you feel when you received the teacher's feedback?
4. Which type of written feedback do you think is the most helpful for your writing?
5. Additional information and suggestions.