An interview study of the usage of written feedback in English education
The students’ and the teachers’ points of view

Linnéa Thorsteinsen

Supervisor: Elias Schwieler
Examiner: Renate Walder
ABSTRACT

Linnéa Thorsteinsen

An interview study of the usage of written feedback in English education
The students’ and the teachers’ points of view

Spring 2010

This paper is a study of written feedback in English teaching in an upper secondary school. The research is a comparative study of the teachers’ and the students’ experiences working with written feedback. The intention of the research is to study the teachers’ usage of feedback on written work in their English teaching and how the students and the teachers experience the feedback in relation to the students’ development in the English language.

The study is based on national and international research regarding the usage of feedback in teaching. The method for the study is qualitative and involves interviews of four teachers and four students.

The results of the study reveal that written feedback is individually adapted and used when assignments are finished. Students who are interested and motivated to learn English are provided with more feedback. Written feedback is combined with oral feedback to make sure the feedback is understood. The written feedback is often provided combined with a grade. Students are of the opinion that feedback develops their skills in English while teachers claim that they do not detect the connection between written feedback and student improvement.

In conclusion students do not get the opportunity to improve their skills due to the absence of process writing which means that students are responsible for whether or not the feedback is acted on. Students who are good in English improve their English more since the teachers provide them with more feedback than the weaker students. The combination of feedback and grades results in the students not paying attention to the feedback.

Keywords: Written feedback, teachers, students, English education, learning, development.
Introduction

Nine years of research in school contexts made by Black and Wiliam (1998) conclude that feedback benefits the learning (Black and Wiliam 1998:140). As a teacher trainee you are taught about the importance of working with feedback for the students to improve their learning. However, I have realized that many students do not appreciate the process of feedback and do not care about the feedback. I have also experienced how some teachers use feedback when the work is already finished. This leaves no time for revisions in order for the students to develop their English languages skills.

Due to these experiences with feedback I find it interesting to study teachers’ usage of written feedback. Furthermore, it is of interest to study whether or not the feedback is efficient and developing for the students. This research is interesting since it not only points out the teacher’s views on feedback but it also studies the student’s opinions. Mitchell & Myles (2004) state that there is not much research on whether students act on feedback and the effect of the feedback provided to students (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:183). The student is the most important factor since the learning process and the development depends on the student. Consequently I wanted to research how the student experiences the working process of written feedback and the results of it. By being aware of the students’ opinions teachers learn how to work with feedback in the best possible ways. Therefore this subject is important for the English subject in school.

I have used the three models of feedback by Susan Askew et al. (2000) to find out what type of written feedback is being used. Another important aspect has been the four rules of feedback developed by Marzano et al. (2001) and Hill & Flynn (2006) which have been used when analyzing the interviews and when investigating whether the rules are applied by the teachers.

My thoughts, before engaging in this project, about the teachers’ and the students’ views on feedback were quite the opposite than the results of this study. I assumed that the teachers would be of the opinion that feedback is developing for students and that students would not really understand the meaning and the point of the process. I hoped that the feedback would be provided occasionally during the working process which also proved to be inaccurate.

This study could be used for further research when comparing different second language learners. Furthermore it would be interesting to do an in-depth analysis of student perceptions of feedback; if the students act on the feedback provided; and how to provide feedback in the
most efficient way. This would require more informants and observations of lessons as well as access to drafts and recasts written by students.

1.1 Aims of the study

The aims of the study are to find out how the students in this study experience feedback on written tasks and if it helps them in their learning process. The aims also include finding out whether or not the teachers and the students have different opinions about working with feedback. The research questions are the following:

- How and when do teachers use written feedback in their English teaching?
- How do students and teachers experience written feedback in terms of learning and developing English language skills?

1.2 Limitations

This study involves English teaching in an upper secondary school. Four students and four teachers have participated in the interviews. The students are between the ages of sixteen to eighteen and are in their second and third years. These students were asked to take part in the research since they have had English for some years. To make a comparison of the students’ and the teachers’ answers the teachers involved are the teachers of the students in the study. The feedback investigated is merely written feedback and not the oral feedback given to the students in class.

1.3 Setting

The study was carried out in an upper secondary school in the middle parts of Sweden. The school was chosen due to the convenience of being the school where my teaching training has been done during my studies. The interviews were conducted in the school environment.

1.4 Study outline

The paper begins with an introduction to the research where the aim is described and important concepts are explained. The ethical considerations of the persons involved in the research and the material used and collected are demonstrated by clarifying the four ethical
rules. The working procedure and how the material was collected, analyzed and compared are explained, as well as the paper’s reliability and validity.

As a background the English syllabus and the school curriculum have been scrutinized and issues in the documents related to feedback and process writing are presented. These documents are the foundation for the way lessons are to be carried out and therefore vital in this research. Next research about the meaning of feedback, the aim of the method, strategies and how feedback can develop students are introduced to inform the reader about process writing and what aspects to take in consideration. The background also includes some information about learning and different methods used in teaching when working with feedback. Four rules and three models of feedback are presented that are later used when analyzing the informants’ answers in the discussion and in the conclusion.

The results of the study are presented through the interviews and the informants’ answers. The results present how and when feedback is used in school and whether or not students and teachers have different or similar opinions and experiences when working with feedback.

The paper ends with a discussion where the background and the students’ and the teachers’ opinions are analyzed, compared and discussed. Finally a conclusion of the study is presented.

1.5 Definition of feedback

To explain the area of research it is important to clarify the definition of feedback. The term feedback refers, according to my own interpretation, to the response given to a person who is in the process of learning. The person who receives the response has performed a task, for example written or orally, and the intention is to develop the person’s skilfulness and ability. Feedback could also be described with the words constructive criticism. In this study merely written feedback will be studied.

Susan Askew’s et al. (2000) support my definition of feedback and adds that “feedback is a judgment about the performance of another” (p. 6) with the intentions to close a gap in knowledge and skills (Askew et al., 2000:6).

1.6 Ethical considerations

The four ethical rules: the demand on information, the demand of approval, the demand of confidentiality and the demand on use have been taken in consideration in this study. The ethical rule that involves information has been complied with since the people involved have been informed about the intentions of the study. The informants have been made aware of
their option to interrupt the participation in the study and their choice to decline answering questions in the interviews. Furthermore the informants will remain unknown for those outside the study and the information collected will be handled professionally and only used for the purpose of research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2004:7, 9, 12, 14).

2 Method and materials

In order to facilitate the research the study took place at the school where my teacher training is done. The informants, four students and four teachers, partook in this study using a convenient sample (Bryman, 2006:114) and by being subjectively chosen. The advantage of using a convenient sample is that the selection of interviewees is random which results in a varied group of informants. However, Bryman states that the convenient sample does not represent the whole group of informants, which results in the study being non-generalizable (Bryman, 2006:114). Additionally, the advantage and disadvantage of the subjective selection are that informants with certain qualities could be selected.

The teachers are teachers of the students in this study. For the informants to remain anonymous (Kvale, 1996:114) the students’ and the teachers’ names were encoded with the letters A-D.

The materials used are the curriculum documents and literature from Swedish, English and pedagogy courses, such as literature in language learning and teaching methods. An example of other relevant and interesting materials is Susan Askew et al.’s (2000) book Feedback for learning with its models of feedback that have created the basis for this research. The rest of the material is collected from the interviews.

2.1 Methods of analysis

The study is qualitative and comparative. By using the method Grounded Theory the data from the research has been analyzed, compared and categorized during the research process (Bryman, 2006:375-380).

The informants were selected both subjectively and randomly. They participated in semi-structured interviews to promote a discussion and further questions (Kvale, 1996:124). To make the interviewees feel comfortable and to prevent the loss of information due to a language barrier, Swedish or English could be used during the interviews. Answers by
informants who decided to use Swedish were translated into English. The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and then transcribed where important parts of the interviews were quoted. The Dictaphone prevented the loss of useful information and enabled re-access to information. The teachers’ and the students’ opinions and experiences with feedback were compared and to facilitate for the reader the information from the interviews was categorized into themes in accordance with the interview questions.

2.2 Reliability and validity

The interviews demonstrate teachers’ and students’ views on feedback, which was the purpose of the study. The validity of concepts is therefore achieved (Bryman, 2002:43). The study is based on interviews of the informants’ opinions and experiences, which make the results subjective. Due to the fact that the interviews took place on separate occasions the teachers’ and the students’ answers did not affect each other. Because of this the internal validity is fulfilled (Bryman, 2002:44).

My thoughts before engaging in this study were that the teachers would ask the students in class if anyone wanted to be interviewed. One of the interested in each class would then be selected. In this way students with all levels of knowledge of the English language would have a chance to participate in the study which would be representative for all students. However, all teachers, except one, seem to have pointed out students themselves. One could then ask why these students were chosen by the teachers to participate in my study and if these choices affected the reliability. Thus these students might be very interested in English and fond of feedback which consequently lead to the unmotivated students in English not being heard. However, whether or not unmotivated students were represented is unknown, which was considered when the conclusion had been made. This realization has lead to an understanding of the significance of choosing samples of informants. However, the study shows students’ overall view on feedback and teachers’ views on all of their students’ work and skills. Therefore I do not consider that this has affected the study’s reliability. Because of this the study is reliable (Bryman, 2002:43).
3 Background

3.1 The syllabus and the curriculum

The syllabus and the curriculum are documents that the teacher uses when, amongst other things, deciding on the contents of the teaching. It is therefore interesting and important in this research to study what these documents convey about feedback.

The aims in the English syllabus concerning feedback in upper secondary school state that the students should improve their writing and that students use methods of learning and evaluation that develop the English language. This is a vague indication of that feedback is a method that should be used. The term feedback is not applied. Moreover, how improvements of the learning are achieved is not described, which leaves the decisions on how this is done to the teacher (Skolverket, 2009/10a; Skolverket, 2009/10b; Skolverket, 2009/10c).

The curriculum Lpf 94 is also dependent on the interpretation of the teacher. For example it emphasizes that students must be able to cooperate and learn from one another and work individually (Lärarförbundet, 2004:39, 43). The teacher must “take consideration to each student’s abilities, needs and levels of knowledge” (p. 38). Additionally, “the teacher is obliged to continuously inform the students of their needs of development and their process in their studies” (p. 48). The student is furthermore “obligated to take responsibility for their own learning” (p. 48).

3.2 Working with feedback

3.2.1 Feedback to learn and develop

Since this paper focuses on Swedish students learning English and teachers providing these students with feedback it is of interest to study the theories of providing feedback and what aspects of providing feedback that must be taken into consideration when giving students feedback on their written work.

In order to develop, students are in need of input from either a teacher or other students. David Boud (2000) states that the input of feedback is used “to produce improved work, through for example redoing the same assignment” (p. 158), but he stresses that if the students do not act upon the feedback “neither they nor those giving feedback will know that it has been effective” (p. 158). Consequently, a written text that has not been rewritten and used as a second draft does not prove the student’s ability in writing and thus the text should not be judged and graded. To write a text must be looked upon as a process that will help the student
to develop and become a better writer (Svenskläraren 4/2000:1, 4). Hence, the reason for working with feedback is to help the students to help themselves. Feedback helps students of all abilities to achieve better results, and to improve the weaker students’ achievements when realizing how to correct their understanding (Black & Wiliam, 1998:140) since these students might not have received the help needed in order to develop (Murphy, 1999:124). Christer Stensmo (1997) claims that feedback must be a part of teaching for the student to learn and develop (Stensmo, 1997:105).

Alison Mackey (2006) presents research findings in second language acquisition which conclude that feedback develops second language learners since this is when they learn the language and are made aware of how the language is used (Mackey, 2006:1). The power of feedback is explained by Susan M Brookhart (2008), who states that:

Feedback can be very powerful if done well. The power of formative feedback lies in its double-barreled approach, addressing both cognitive and motivational factors at the same time. Good feedback gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next—the cognitive factor. Once they feel they understand what to do and why, most students develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning—the motivational factor (p. 2).

To make the student aware of their difficulties and for them to develop in their own pace according to their needs, meta-knowledge during teaching could be used. This method makes the students reflect on their learning which leads to the realization of “how to learn how to learn”, which results in the students being self regulated learners (Korp, 2003:31, 66). The feedback can then be adapted to the student’s needs (Linnarud, 2002:129-130).

### 3.2.2 Providing written feedback

To be able to provide feedback it is vital to know what to take in consideration when writing feedback. Feedback needs to be focused on certain aspects of the text, Torlaug Løkensgard Hoel (2001) claims. Additionally it needs to be selective in order to improve students’ written work so as to not discourage the student with too much work. A few aspects make the student willing to make changes, while too much often is considered overwhelming (Hoel, 2001:208-209, 213). Thus the effect of giving too much feedback could result in students not using their second language (Linnarud, 2002:132). This opinion is shared by Brookhart who states that
feedback is most efficient when it is descriptive and focuses on the task, when it has influence on students’ development and motivation, and when students are interested in the task (Brookhart, 2008:8).

Thus, if there are no feedback and corrections the student will, according to Thornbury (1999) and Brown (2000), not progress and remain at the same level of knowledge (Hill & Flynn, 2006:31, 34). If there is no progress Linnarud claims that the language could be fossilized. To prevent the fossilization Linnarud stresses the fact that it is important for second language learners to be aware of their flaws and difficulties. Furthermore students must be exposed to tasks and situations that are outside their zone of proximal development in order to develop (Linnarud, 2002:128-130). Like Olga Dysthe et al. (2001) put it: “thoughts and texts are put in progress by feedback that is critical, challenging and feedback that makes the student struggle and forces them to think (Dysthe et al., 2001:135).

In their research Fiona Hyland and Ken Hyland (2001) recognize that many students do not appreciate nor understand feedback that contains a judgment with no explanation on what needs to be improved (Hyland & Hyland, 2001:1). It is therefore vital to make comments that are specific and exact, mostly positive, concrete, problem based and truthful which will make the student start thinking about and analyzing how to express themselves (Svenskläraren, 2000:1-2, 4). It is also of great importance to interact with the student in order for them to understand the corrections in the feedback (Mitchell and Myles, 2004:181).

When providing feedback the outcomes of the process vary according to Brookhart who explains that “the effects of feedback depend on the nature of the feedback” (p. 4). Most importantly the feedback must be acted on by the student (Brookhart, 2008:8). This is stated by Robert J. Marzano et al. (2001) when citing John Hattie’s (1992) thoughts about feedback: “the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be ’dollops of feedback’” (p. 96). John Truscott (1996), on the other hand, is of a different opinion regarding the developmental effects of feedback on grammar errors:

(a) Substantial research shows it to be ineffective and none shows it to be helpful in any interesting sense; (b) for both theoretical and practical reasons, one can expect it to be ineffective; and (c) it has harmful effects (Truscott, 1996:327).
According to Truscott corrections on errors in grammar are believed to be harmful for the development of students since it has negative “effect on students’ attitudes [...]” (p. 328) and “the acquisition of a grammatical structure is a gradual process, not a sudden discovery as the intuitive view of correction would imply” (p. 343). Truscott continues by claiming that even if students want feedback on their work and believe it helps them in their learning process the teacher must not provide feedback but merely help them learn without involving any corrections (Truscott, 1998:359).

To continue on the matter on how to provide efficient feedback Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998) claim that feedback consists of “three elements: recognition of the desired goal, evidence about present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two” (p. 143). Furthermore Black and Wiliam state that self-assessment makes the students aware of their learning and what they need to work with to develop (Black and Wiliam, 1998:143). Self-assessment enables the student to close the gaps. Similarly David Boud (2000) argues that effective feedback commences with effective student self-assessment in which the student responds to the work produced and the procedure (Boud, 2000:152, 158).

3.2.3 The teacher and the student

This paper involves students and teachers of English and their experiences working with feedback. Research about feedback from the perspective of both students and teachers has therefore been studied to understand their situation and their work.

It is vital for the teachers to realize that their expectations have a direct impact on the results of the students’ achievements (Stensmo, 1997:101). Black and Wiliam add that the teacher needs to believe in their students’ abilities in order for the students to make progress and achieve good results. Furthermore teachers need to be aware of their students’ needs and adapt lessons according to them. When taking these aspects into consideration formative assessment is undertaken. The teacher’s approach and attitude towards learning and teaching are therefore according to Black and Wiliam of great importance when providing feedback. However, Black and Wiliam claim that teachers’ often predict their students’ results although they know little about their students’ needs. Teachers that focus on rewards and student comparisons produce students with no interests in improving their skills or challenging their thinking. Instead students become afraid of making mistakes and do not participate in classroom discussions (Black and Wiliam, 1998:140, 142).
Icy Lee (1999) concludes in her study that there is a relation between the teachers’ beliefs of how they provide feedback and how the feedback to the students actually is provided. The teachers claim to concentrate on the content and the structure of the texts when providing written feedback but the study concludes that in reality the focus is on the language. 90 percent of the teachers in the study stated that they provided selective feedback where the most vital aspects were brought up. In reality the teachers’ feedback was much more frequent than assumed. 96 percent of the teachers emphasized the importance of students being able to correct their own errors. Despite this 70 percent of the teachers provide the error corrections. Only 8 percent of the teachers believe that their error corrective feedback helps the students to develop but all teachers in her study still continue providing error corrective feedback in the same way. Teachers are aware of that students are more interested in grades than the feedback provided, still grades and feedback share the same piece of paper. The feedback provided by the teachers in the study focused on the students’ weaknesses and not on their abilities which the teachers claimed. Process writing is considered an important part of the learning process but despite this most of the teachers in the study rarely use this aspect in lessons. Written tasks are due to lack of time often only written once without the presence of any drafts and recasts (Lee, 1999:15-18).

Efficient feedback does not entirely depend on the teacher. Some students are difficult to motivate since not all students want or wish to achieve great results. This is confirmed in a report from Switzerland where a number of students are happy as long as they, as Black and Wiliam express it: “get by” (Black and Dylan Wiliam, 1998:142). Some students are reluctant to teacher feedback since they find recasts boring, hard work and do not see the point in doing recasts. Nicole and Macfrelane-Dick (2006) explain that teacher feedback might “augment, concur or conflict with the student’s interpretation of the task and the path of learning. However, to produce an effect on internal processes or external outcomes the student must actively engage with these external inputs” (pp. 4-5). Black and Wiliam explain this by stating that “pupils cannot be expected to believe in the value of changes for their learning before they have experienced the benefits of such changes” (p. 144). Moreover there needs to be a dialogue between the student and the teacher about the feedback and the student performance (Marzano et al., 2001:96).

Patricia Murphy (1999) claims that “for effective learning, it makes a difference if pupils believe that effort is more important than ability, that mistakes are an inevitable part of learning, and that they have control over their own learning” (p. 125). Brookhart’s research showed that an evaluative feedback was not motivating enough for the students for them to do
well. Students who received no feedback achieved the worst results and experienced little motivation (Brookhart, 2008:8). The negative attitude towards evaluative feedback is shared with Black and Wiliam who claim that in order for the feedback to be efficient student work should not be graded.

Research studies have shown that, if pupils are given only marks or grades, they do not benefit from the feedback. Feedback has been shown to improve learning when it gives each pupil specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses, preferably without any overall marks. (Black and Wiliam, 1998:144).

There is no point in testing knowledge when assignments are finished since there is no time for the students to improve their learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998:142, 144). There must be a focus on the process and not the result (Korp, 2003:80) which students must be made aware of. In order to learn, feedback and improvement are more important in the learning process than getting the highest grade or finishing a task without asking the teacher for help (Brookhart, 2008:2). Boud explains the focus on the grades by stating that:

As a society we have become obsessed with certification and grading and public measures of performance and accountability. [...] But in the process of giving attention to certification we have pushed into the background a concern for learning and the necessary assessment processes which need to accompany it. Ironically, we have given insufficient attention to those aspects of assessment that contribute most to students’ ability to learn for themselves and thus contribute to a learning society (p. 155).

### 3.2.4 Three models of feedback

There are different approaches available for the teacher when working with feedback. Susan Askew et al. (2000) present three models of feedback: the receptive transmission, the constructive and the co-constructive model.

The receptive transmission model is seen as feedback given only from the teacher. There is a one-way communication where the teacher talks and the student listens and receives new knowledge. The feedback often contains evaluations with no help on how to improve the work. Discussions are absent and the feedback given is not at the same level of knowledge as the student. Teachers who use this method tend to have preconceptions about the student’s
background and capacity: “girls attributed failure to lack of ability rather than motivation; this was because teachers’ feedback to boys and girls was such that it would lead to girls feeling less able, while allowing boys to explain their failure through lack of effort or poor behavior” (p. 8). Askew et al. continue stating that the receptive transmission is not the most effective feedback method and calls it the “killer feedback” since it, according to them, hinders students to learn (Askew et al., 2000:5-7).

A feedback method that Askew et al. find more preferable is the constructive model. This feedback is called ping-pong feedback by the authors to demonstrate that this model involves descriptions and discussions between the teacher and the student. The student’s abilities are taken into consideration without having preconceptions. The model stresses the importance of student motivation and student influence with the opportunity to make choices in their learning. Askew et al. explain that “education in this model is based on the principle of ‘drawing out’, rather than ‘putting in’” and “it assumes that young people are rational decision-makers, can be self-directed and learn autonomously” (p. 9). In the constructive model the teacher is the person in charge and the one that makes decisions and due to this feedback is often not adjusted to the person who receives it. “Knowledge is constructed by the learner, including through activities such as participatory learning, open-ended questioning, discussion and discovery learning” (p. 9). Furthermore knowledge is believed to appear when using the learner’s experiences in the teaching (Askew et al., 2000:9-10).

The third and last model is the co-constructive model which equals a dialogue between the teacher and the student. The teacher and the student are seen as individuals with their own subjective experiences and knowledge. The teacher is not recognized as the person in charge. “The goal of this model is to achieve enlightenment and empowerment through a process of individual, group and organizational change” (p. 12). Critical thinking, reflection and self-interpretation are of great importance. The work in school is used in the real world and the students perceive themselves and their work as important and valuable. The model emphasizes “action for change” (p. 11). Since the student is able to reflect on the learning meta-learning is made possible in this model. Learning is a responsibility shared by both the teacher and the student and judgments are rare (Askew et al., 2000:11-13).

Additionally Eileen Carnell (2000) emphasizes the relationship between the student and the teacher and claims that it is of great importance that there is trust and recognition between them for learning to be made possible (Askew et al., 2000:54). Trygve Bergem (2000) claims that if there is no trust the teacher cannot “help the student to grow and develop as a human being” (p. 79).
To summarize the above research about written feedback Marzano et al. and Jane Hill and Kathleen Flynn are in agreement on the terms of how feedback should be provided:

1. It is important to speak with the student about what the student masters and what needs to be worked on.
2. Provide feedback during the writing process.
3. Learning is individual and must be in relation to the student’s abilities.
4. Student self-assessment.

Additionally for the improvement to take place the student must act on the teacher feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998:141).

4 Results

Below the interviews of the students and the teachers are presented. The four students are named student A, B, C and D, and the teachers are named teacher A, B, C and D. Interviews with more details are found in attachment three.

4.1 Student interviews

4.1.1 Feedback for learning

All students in this study are positive towards feedback and believe that written feedback develops their English skills. Written feedback is motivating since students are made aware of what they master and what need they need to improve. Student D states that “Every time my teacher provides feedback that is either positive or constructive I learn and develop”.

4.1.2 The non-process writing

Drafts are rarely used in the students’ English classes and written feedback is provided on most tasks when assignments are finished. Thus, “the working process is not considered but only the product”, student A claims. Students have the option to receive feedback whilst writing longer essays. Some tasks contain merely comments, but others include both feedback and grading. According to three of the students the grading is considered more interesting
than the feedback, however student A states that “grades are not important and do not mean much”.

The written feedback is saved by the majority of the students to avoid making the same mistakes and used when writing similar assignments. Student A states that “recasts are important and developing; therefore I save the feedback and use it when writing the next essay or task”. Furthermore the non-process writing is commented by the student: “I do not understand the meaning of feedback if it is not internalized”. However, the majority of the students do not react when being questioned about the fact that the written feedback is provided when tasks have finished, which leaves no time for improvements of the text. Additionally student A expresses her views on the situation and states that “really it is quite pointless to be provided with feedback when the work is done, but it has always been like that. You are made aware of your achievement when the work is finished”.

4.1.3 The quality and quantity of feedback

The feedback is positive and constructive and is just the right amount, all students claim except student B who believes that the feedback sometimes is too much and over-whelming. Thus, “The amount of written feedback on an essay depends on the length of the essay”, student A states. The written feedback is provided as a summary at the end of the text with notes in the margin. The focus is on the text but the teachers concentrate on certain aspects that they think the students need to work on (see attachment four).

4.1.4 Discussions improve the learning

All informants state that the written feedback is combined with an oral discussion with the teacher. “I find written feedback confusing since I do not always understand it”, student A claims. Due to difficulties in understanding written feedback the discussion is preferred by the majority of the students when providing written feedback.

Assessments of the students’ work and performance are not used. Instead the students discuss their assignments with the teacher when being provided with the written feedback.
4.2 Teacher interviews

4.2.1 The structure of the feedback

The feedback is individually adapted and focuses on the most important aspects that will help and develop the student. Only teacher A lets the students write drafts and both teacher A and B provide feedback on all written assignments.

Teacher A claims that she underlines sentences with a suggestion of that there is, for example a “noun” in the text that is misused or incorrect. The students then have to find out the error by themselves. Teacher D provides the students with a preset feedback form before and after the assignment, where achievements and improvements are documented. “In this way students understand and seldom need to ask questions about the feedback”, the teacher claims. However, the students decide if they want feedback or not, the teacher adds.

Teacher B and C provide the students with feedback where words and sentences are underlined and corrected. Comments are made within the text with abbreviations in the margin. Additionally, a summary of the feedback is written at the end of the text with notes on what the student have done well and what needs improvement. The summary is positive in the beginning and constructive towards the end (see attachment 4). Teacher B claims that “the focus is on the content, the structure and the language and whether the aim of the task has been fulfilled by the student or not. The language is corrected depending on whether or not the errors interfere or spoil the text”. This means that incorrect choice of words or sentence structure, or terms from the mother tongue are errors that are regarded to obscure the language and have negative effect on the reader and therefore corrected.

4.2.2 Students do not understand the impact of feedback

The students do not understand that feedback is a process that requires time and energy. Students find the grading more interesting than the feedback, the teachers claim. Still, the teachers combine both aspects in the students’ assignments.

The teachers believe that students do not develop their English skills when being provided with feedback. Teacher B claims that “I do not think that the time spent on writing feedback is worth it. I do not see much progress in the students”, which is agreed on by teacher C. This is due to the fact that most students are not interested in the feedback, they claim. However, all teachers believe feedback to be a good learning strategy and they provide written feedback in
order to improve the students’ abilities and skills in English. Additionally teacher C adds that the feedback must be acted on for the students to learn.

Moreover teacher C claims that students want feedback, otherwise they start arguing that “if I only get VG on this text and there is no feedback how am I supposed to know what to do to get a higher grade?” (VG is the grade that equals “pass with distinction”).

Students who are interested in English are provided with more feedback, teachers C and D claim. Furthermore, teacher D lets the students decide whether or not feedback should be provided or if they are only interested in the grade.

4.2.3 Written feedback is provided with a discussion

The written feedback is provided individually to the students. Assignments and feedback are discussed with the students to make sure that the students understand. The discussion is a vital tool for the students to recognise their abilities and to improve, which according to teacher A is not realized without the discussion. However, teacher D believes that the discussion is not necessary and claims that the modules used in English are enough for the students to realize their needs.

5 Discussion

Written feedback combined with a discussion

The written feedback is provided using the constructive model of feedback (Askew et al., 2000:9-10) which is appreciated by both students and teachers in this study. This is indicated since the teachers combine an oral discussion when providing the written feedback and due to the fact that the teachers adapt the feedback individually (see 4.2.1) which is emphasized by Lpf 94 (Lärarförbundet, 2004:38).

Written feedback combined with an oral discussion is considered important by the students and the teachers since this type of approach minimizes misunderstandings and clarifies the feedback (see 4.1.4 and 4.2.3). Hyland and Hyland (2001) as well as Mitchell and Myles (2004) confirm this in their research about the importance of having an interaction between the student and the teacher in order to avoid confusion (Hyland & Hyland, 2001:1; Mitchell and Myles, 2004:181). Thus merely written feedback often results in the students asking questions about the comments. Also the students have the opportunity to express their opinions about the assignment and their achievement. In addition, the discussion between the
student and the teacher gives the student the opportunity to reflect on meta-knowledge which is, according to Korp, considered a vital tool when learning and developing (Korp, 2003:66).

Meta-knowledge or self-assessment is believed to be an important aspect of feedback in order for the student to be made aware of mistakes and how to improve since the aim is to close the gap between the existent knowledge and the desired knowledge (Boud, 2000: 152, 158). This opinion is shared by student D who would like to assess the work more in order to learn how to learn. However, teacher C claims that reflections are used in the teaching which is not confirmed by student C (see attachment 3). Yet the only assessment present, where students have the opportunity to express their achievement and aspects that need improvement, is the discussion with the teacher when receiving the combination of written and oral feedback (see attachment 3), which leads to no genuine student assessment. What seems to be missing is a reflection or a discussion dedicated to the student’s needs and goals. Thus the goal with feedback is, according to Brookhart, to give “students’ information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next” (p. 2). However, Lpf 94 stresses the student’s own responsibility for the learning (Lärarförbundet, 2004:48).

Individualized feedback

The stressed self-learning in the constructive model of feedback (Askew et al. 2000:9-10) could be interpreted as to be obtained by teacher C when making her students choose an aspect of language learning that they have difficulties with and focus on that aspect for some time (see attachment 3). Moreover, teacher A makes the students find and correct their errors by themselves (see attachment 3). This is individualized teaching where the students learn about their difficulties. However the teachers do not fully follow the constructive model of feedback since some of the teachers generalize about their students and decide the amount of feedback needed based on the teachers’ assumed knowledge about their students’ needs (see 4.2.2). To know the student’s needs and to help the student to develop is emphasized in Lpf 94 (Lärarförbundet, 2004:38, 48) and is considered a vital aspect of teaching and providing of feedback, according to Black and Wiliam, who have concluded that many teachers predict their students’ needs (Black and Wiliam, 1998:140, 142). To assume about students knowledge is not a preferable approach since the students are already judged. To minimize the risk of generalizations a free mind and a close relationship between the students and the teacher are important factors. The relationship between students and the teachers is
emphasized by student A who finds it vital for learning (see attachment 3); this is also regarded as an important aspect by Black and Wiliam (1998:141) and Bergem (2000:79).

What is surprising is that the teacher expectations are believed to be self-fulfilling (Stensmo, 1997:101), which the teachers evidently state when claiming that most of the effort is spent on the motivated and interested students (see 4.2.2). According to Black and Wiliam feedback is particularly important for the weak students since these students are in need of being helped and guided (Black & Wiliam, 1998:140). However, teacher C and D claim that the focus often lies on the students who are interested in English and want to learn more (see attachment 3).

Furthermore the assumptions made by teachers by their students’ abilities are often not justified since the teachers most of the time do not know their students as much as they might think they do. This could result in the students not progressing as much as if the teachers had higher expectations (Black and Wiliam, 1998:142).

The structure of feedback

The students are motivated to improve their learning with positive and constructive criticism provided by the teacher. The teachers focus on the content, the structure, the language and whether or not the requirements of the assignments have been fulfilled. Specific and concrete comments are made, both students and teachers claim. Furthermore students and teachers explain that the written feedback is presented with under-lineings in the texts, marks in the margin and with a brief summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the assignments (see attachment 4). This is adapted to the needs of the students to make them aware of their strengths and weaknesses (see 4.2.1) all according to the research by Marzano et al. (2001:96-98) and Hill & Flynn (2006:32). Teacher A and D verbally never expressed that they individualize the feedback according to the student’s needs. However, it was understood in the discussion with the teachers that the feedback was individualized. Teacher B and C state that the feedback needs to be selective and adapted to the needs of the student, while teacher A and D claim that they focus on aspects in the assignments that the student need to learn in order to be able to speak good English (see attachment 3).

All the teachers in the study claimed that the feedback concentrated on a few aspects of the students’ written assignments (see 4.2.1), which is similar to what Lee found in her research where 90 percent of the teachers were of the opinion that they only focused on a few aspects when providing feedback (Lee, 1999:15-18). Recasts demand a lot of work but student B finds that the learning of it rewarding (see attachment 3). The only aspect in Truscott’s reasoning that is found in this study is that error corrections have a negative effect of student
attitudes (Truscott, 1996:328), since student B occasionally believes that the teacher provides too much feedback which according to the student, makes it overwhelming (see attachment 3). This could be explained by the actual results of the observations from Lee’s study which concluded that teachers commented on much more in the texts than they realized (Lee, 1999:15-18). To correct more than the student can handle could result in the student not being willing to use the English language since the motivation and the confidence are lost, Linnarud claims (Linnarud, 2002:132). The teacher then has to be more focused in the commenting in order to help and not discourage the student (Hoel, 2001:208-209, 213). To avoid the fossilization in the learning process where students stop developing, the students should be made aware of their difficulties and the teacher must provide the help needed (Linnarud, 2002:129-130).

Despite Truscott’s research regarding the negative effects of feedback and corrections in the student’s usage of grammar the students in this study do not seem to be harmed by being commented on their work (Truscott, 1996:327). As a matter of fact the students appreciate the feedback. They want feedback from the teacher and use it when in need of it. The students find the feedback valuable in their studies and claim that it helps them in their learning. All students, except student C are positive towards working with feedback and find it necessary in order to make progress. Student C has no experience working with feedback and therefore has no opinions about the method (see attachment 3). Although the written feedback is used after the working process the students still make use of it and find it valuable for their learning, which is quite a strong illustration of the students’ views on feedback.

The non-process writing
All teachers believe that feedback is a good method for learning. Despite of this teachers B and C claim that they do not notice any development in the students when working with feedback. Additionally, they find feedback time consuming and question whether feedback is worth the while (see 4.2.2). Similarly Lee’s research reveals that only 8 percent of the teachers were of the opinion that error correction helps students to develop (Lee, 1999:15-18). This could probably be explained by the fact that neither of the teachers uses feedback correctly. Feedback is offered to the students by teacher C and D but not normally asked for by the students (see attachment 3). This could be explained by the statements of Black and Wiliam who claim that students are not aware of the impact of feedback in their development. To make the students aware of this is, however, the teachers’ responsibility. Yet, the teachers do not either seem to be aware of the impact of feedback.
The interviews conclude that the product is in focus and not the process, which according to Murphy is non-effective learning (Murphy, 1999:125). The students are graded on the majority of their work and receive grades and feedback when the work has finished. An example of this is shown in attachment four where a teacher has provided feedback and a grade to one of her students. The student is urged to refine the language and the structure of the text, but the student has nevertheless received a grade. All students claim that feedback is given when the work is finished although some teachers state that they occasionally use feedback during the working process (see 4.2.1). Recasts are not used in student C’s and D’s classes and only used occasionally in student A’s and B’s classes. However, student A and D claim that their teachers offer them feedback on their assignments if they wish, this is also confirmed by the teachers. Teacher A is the only teacher that lets the students practice writing drafts without being graded; this teacher also understand the feedback process and is aware of feedback being a process that takes time. Furthermore students B and C receive written feedback on most tasks and student A and D occasionally on bigger essays. This is contradictory since teacher A and B claim that feedback is given on all written assignments. However, teacher C states that feedback is given on all written work. Moreover student B and D receive both grades and feedback on their written assignments. This is also the situation in student A’s and C’s classes although these students explain that they are provided with merely feedback on some of their tasks, which is confirmed by one of the teachers namely teacher C (see attachment 3). In her study, Lee claims that not to use the process writing in schools is found to be common (Lee, 1999:15-18).

Providing feedback when the tasks are finished and the combination of grades and feedback are two aspects of teaching that are not congruent with what, for example Black and Wiliam have found in their research. They claim that grades should not be used in order for the feedback to be efficient since this combination is not beneficial for the students’ learning and progression. These students end up not wanting to improve their English (Black and Wiliam, 1998:142, 144). Additionally Black and Wiliam state that feedback on work that is finished is a waste of time and gives the student no opportunity to work with the text (Black and Wiliam, 1998:142, 144). Due to the absence of feedback during the writing process and due to the fact that only teacher C made the students reflect on their learning (see attachment 3) the teachers do not attain the four rules of feedback presented by Marzano et al. (2001:96-98) and Hill & Flynn (2006:32).

Moreover Lee’s study shows that students are more interested in the grading and therefore do not care about the written feedback next to the grade (Lee, 1999:15-18). This is the case in
this study where three of the students find the grading more interesting than the feedback and all of the teachers are aware of this (see 4.1.2). Teacher D actually asks her students if they want merely a grade on their assignments or if they also would like to be provided with feedback (see attachment 3). To ask students if they want feedback is to ask if they want to develop and learn. The teacher is left with less work to do for those students who do not wish to have feedback on their assignments but these students will then continue their learning without any progress. This makes it a non-win situation for both the student and the teacher. Providing of feedback is essential and a must for the learning, thus the teacher is obliged to help the students to develop. Boud explains the obsession with grades by blaming it on society’s interest in qualifications and paper work (Boud, 2000:155).

Feedback must be acted on

The feedback needs to be acted on for the student to learn and improve (Black & Wiliam, 1998:141; Brookhart, 2008:8). This conclusion is shared by the students in this study, who all claim that they learn and develop when being provided with feedback. Thus this is not the case in the study since the students do not have the opportunity to correct their papers and check their rewrites with the teacher (see attachment 4). The absence of process writing in classes depends according to Lee (1999) on lack of time (Lee, 1999:15-18). Consequently the students will not progress in their development (Hill & Flynn, 2006:31, 34) or the students must be responsible for the feedback to be acted on. The feedback helps and guides them in their writing and makes them aware of how to use the language correctly. Although the teachers do not offer recasts of the written assignments students A, C and D keep their written work with the feedback in a folder and look at the feedback when in need of help on how to write (see attachment 3). Despite that the students understand that feedback must be acted on to help them the students do not react when being provided with feedback on tasks that are finished and graded. They state that the working process has always been this way and that the comments on how they write could be used on the next task. Only student D reacts and agrees with the argument about this working process being pointless and adds that the product is the main thing in school (see attachment 3), the change in focus to process working lessons is also emphasized by Korp (2003:80).
6 Conclusions

I have found that teachers mostly work with feedback when the assignments are finished. This implies that students do not have the opportunity to do a second draft and learn from the feedback by improving the texts. In order for the student to implement the feedback the students’ need to save it for the next assignment to know the strengths and not to make the same mistakes. In consequence it is quite surprising that the teachers claim that they do not notice any improvements in their students and therefore consider whether or not the time spent on feedback is worth it. Thus as I see it the unnoticed improvements could be explained by the way the feedback process is carried out involving no process writing.

Furthermore no recasts and the combination of feedback and grades on finished tasks indicate that the students are responsible for whether or not feedback is acted on. The students own responsibility for the learning is stated in Lpf 94 (Lärarförbundet, 2004: 48). In my opinion the majority of students do not want to work if not being controlled, checked and graded on their work. This results in that many of the students do not look at the feedback at all. In these cases the feedback is a waste of time and consequently does not help anyone.

Some teachers in the study claim that the interested students are the ones that want feedback on their work. One teacher even said that most of the feedback is provided to these students. This means that students that already master English well improve their English even more because the teacher spends more time on these students’ feedback. As a result the students who are considered to be the weaker students and the ones that actually are in need of the feedback do not receive the help needed in order to improve.

The interviews with the teachers and the students made a comparison of them possible. As the results show students and teachers have different opinions about the effects of feedback. The research indicates that written feedback is used after assignments are finished combined with a discussion with the student. Teachers and students have different opinions about the development in students when using written feedback; teachers claim that feedback has little or no effect on the learning process while students state that they do develop when being provided with feedback since the feedback is saved and used on different assignments. However, the students and their teachers have more or less the same understanding of how the written feedback is carried out.

The fact that some aspects in the students’ and the teachers’ reasoning differed could simply mean that the students had forgotten how the work was done or that they do not understand the working process. From the teachers’ points of view different statements could indicate a
feeling of unease towards me and the questions being posed. However, I did not recognize the meetings with the teachers to be of the latter character and believe that the students had forgotten the working procedure.

The teachers in this study all stated that students are more interested in the grade than the feedback. Despite of this written feedback is frequently combined with grades. These facts along with the fact of feedback being provided when the work has finished indicate that teachers are not aware of how feedback should be used. The question is then why teachers do not merely provide feedback on the majority of the assignments and discuss the grades with the students on frequent occasions to make the student aware of their skills. The combination of feedback and grades could also be explained by the fact that teachers are stuck in their routines and find it hard to change. It could also be explained with the teachers finding process writing overwhelming and too much work, just what Lee found in her research (Lee, 1999:15-18).

In accordance with what the results indicate the teachers do not attain the four rules of feedback (Marzano et al., 2001:96-98; Hill & Flynn, 2006:32). The only two rules that are fully followed are the fact that teachers adapt the feedback individually and that there is a discussion about what is mastered and what needs to be worked on. One of the teachers and none of the students said that student self-assessment is used. Furthermore, since the feedback is provided when the working process is finished the rule that feedback should be used during the working process is not obtained.

The fact that student self-assessment is not generally used lower the students chances to be made aware of what needs to be worked on. However the discussion with the teacher when being provided with the written feedback could help the student in some cases. Although this discussion needs to be developed in order to really find out how the student could improve the learning and develop. Furthermore, to make feedback more learning orientated the feedback must be provided and used during the working process and not left with the students to decide whether or not it should be acted on in a different writing context.

For further research it would be of interest to merely interview students who are considered unmotivated and weak in the English language and see if the results would differ. It is also of interest to study the actual work of the students and their written feedback and do an analysis of whether or not the feedback provided is according to the student’s needs in order for them to develop. This, however, is a long-term study that would need months or years of research. Another important aspect is why teachers provide feedback after the working process.
I am ending this study wondering why written feedback is provided after the work is done and if this is how written feedback is provided in other schools too.
References


Bryman, Alan, 2002: Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder. Malmö: Liber AB.


**Electronic sources**


Appendix 1

Interview questions to students

- Do you think the teacher’s feedback is helpful for your improvement of the English language?
- How does your English teacher provide written feedback? How do you feel about the amount of written feedback being provided?
- Do you write recasts during classes? What is your opinion about that method?
- When does the teacher use written feedback?
- When do you want written feedback?
- Is it easy to understand the teachers’ written feedback?
- What are your opinions about feedback that only says: “good” and “interesting”?
- Do you assess your progress and your work? Do you work with meta-learning?
- What do you do with the written feedback provided?
- What is more interesting – your grade or the feedback?

- Ansar du att lärarens respons hjälper dig i din utveckling av engelskan?
- Hur ser den skriftliga responsen ut? Vad anser du om mängden respons?
- Skrivs utkast på engelsklektionerna? Vad anser du om det arbetssättet?
- När används skriftlig respons?
- När vill du ha skriftlig respons?
- Är det lätt att förstå lärarens skriftliga respons?
- Vad anser du om respons där det endast står exempelvis ”bra” eller ”intressant”?
- Utvärderar du din utveckling och ditt arbete? Används metakänsla?
- Vad gör du med responsen du får av läraren?
- Vad anser du vara mest intressant betyget eller responsen?
Appendix 2

Interview questions to teachers

- When do you use written feedback in your teaching?
- How do you provide written feedback to the students? Do you grade them as well?
- What do you take in consideration when providing feedback?
- How much feedback do you provide? Do you focus on certain parts of the text?
- Why do you use written feedback?
- Do you experience that the students develop their English when working with feedback? What do students learn when being provided with feedback?
- Do you reckon all students learn from feedback? How can you tell?
- How do students react on your written feedback? Do you get any response at all?
- Do you believe students listen and take in your given feedback?
- Are they more interested in the feedback or the grading?
- Do the students understand your written feedback? Do you need to discuss the feedback orally with the student?
- Do you let the students assess themselves and their work?

- När använder du dig av skriftlig respons?
- Hur skrivs den skriftliga responsen till eleverna? Betygsätts eleverna också?
- Vad tar du hänsyn till vid responsgivning?
- Hur mycket skriftlig respons ger du? Fokuserar du på något speciellt?
- Varför använder du dig av skriftlig respons?
- Upplever du att eleverna utvecklas i sin engelska pga. responsarbete? Vad lär sig eleverna vid användandet av detta arbetssätt? Lär sig alla elever av denna metod? Hur?
- Hur reagerar eleverna på responsen?
- Är eleverna mest intresserade av betyget eller responsen?
- Förfinner eleverna den skriftliga responsen? Diskuteras responsen med eleverna?
- Får eleverna utvärdera sin utveckling och sina prestationer?
Appendix 3

Student and teacher interviews

Student interviews

Feedback for learning

The interviews revealed that all students believe that written feedback develop their English skills.

Student A and D explain that positive or constructive feedback provided by the teacher is motivating for learning: “Every time my teacher provides feedback that is either positive or constructive I learn and develop”, student D claims. This since criticism makes the student aware of the mistakes made and the skills that are mastered. Student B is of the same opinion as student A and finds that written feedback develops the English skills. Student C and D claim that they develop more when being provided with feedback since problems and mistakes are realised and worked on. Additionally student A finds it important that the teacher cares about the student and that they have a close relationship for the feedback and the learning to be efficient.

The non-process writing

All students state that drafts are rarely used and written feedback is provided when assignments are finished. Student D claims that “the working process is not considered but only the product”.

Drafts are not used in student C’s and D’s classes. Student D is positive towards working with drafts and recasts and student C is indifferent since she has no experience working with it. However, both students regard feedback as good piece of advice on how to improve the work. Moreover, recasts are not regularly used in student A’s nor B’s classes and drafts were made once in the first grade two years ago in student B’s class. Student B finds writing recasts hard work but rewarding since it is developing. Student A claims that “recasts are important and developing, therefore I save the feedback and use it when writing the next essay or task”. Student A adds that: “I do not understand the meaning of feedback if it is not internalized”. Feedback is also saved by students C and D for next assignments to avoid making the same mistakes.
When asking student C what the reaction is when being provided with feedback on an assignment that is completed and it is too late to improve the text the student answers “I do not think about it like that, then I know what to do the next time when writing a similar text”. To clarify, the student does not consider feedback that is provided after a finished assignment as a waste of time since the feedback is useful for other areas as well. However, student D states that “really it is quite pointless to be provided with feedback when the work is done, but it has always been like that. You are made aware of your achievement when the work is finished”. Moreover the student points out that the class has the option to receive verbal feedback and help from the teacher during the process, but student D seldom asks for this help. Student B likes the fact that the feedback is provided after the task has finished since it can be used on other tasks, although the feedback is not saved by the student.

Student A and D are provided with written feedback only occasionally and only on bigger essays. Student D explains that tasks that are graded are also provided with feedback. Student D claims that only two tasks have been provided with feedback since last semester. The teachers inform the students, when writing essays, that they are welcome to send their essays so that feedback can be provided. This is optional though and not used by student A or D. Student C, on the other hand, receives written feedback on almost all written tasks. Furthermore, student B is provided with written feedback combined with oral feedback on most of the written assignments.

Grades and feedback are given on assignments that are finished, student B and D claim. On some tasks there are only comments, but on some assignments both feedback and grading is done, student A and C explain. Three of the students find the grading more interesting than the feedback, however, student A states that “grades are not important and do not mean much”.

**The quality and quantity of feedback**

“The amount of written feedback on an essay depends on the length of the essay”, student A explains. All students explain that the teachers focus on the positive feedback and are constructive; this is recognized as the best ways of providing feedback by the students. The teacher focuses on the whole text but concentrates on the important aspects that the students need to work on. Vague words like “good” or “interesting” are never used by the teacher student A states. The teacher sometimes only writes “good” on tasks which student B
interprets as an assignment that has no errors. Furthermore student A states that the teacher never focuses on the errors or that the motivation is lost because of negative feedback. The feedback is just the right amount students A, C and D claim, while student B is of the opinion that the feedback sometimes is too much and overwhelming. The written feedback is provided as a summary at the end of the text with notes in the margin, all students claim.

**Discussions improve the learning**

All informants state that the written feedback is combined with an oral discussion with the teacher individually. This is preferred since the written feedback is sometimes difficult to understand.

“I find written feedback confusing since I do not always understand it”, student A claims. The oral feedback is therefore preferred and this opinion is shared by student B. Student C does not prefer a special kind of feedback and explains that she asks the teacher about feedback that is not understood. Student D prefers a combination of written and verbal feedback in order to receive sufficient feedback that is understood.

All students state that they never assess their work and performance to make themselves aware of their knowledge and what needs to be done to make improvements. The only assessment is made when the students talk to the teacher when they are provided with the feedback. During the discussion the teachers ask the students about the assignment and whether or not they are satisfied with their achievements. Student D claims that she would prefer an assessment where the students have the opportunity to express their experiences and achievements verbally based on pre-written questions by the teacher.

**Teacher interviews**

**The structure of the feedback**

Teacher A makes comments on all written assignments and claims that “I use helpful criticism because I do not want to hurt their feelings”. Teacher A makes the students write drafts as exercises but not when it comes to the grading material since the students’ level of knowledge must be revealed in order to provide a grade. Teacher A and C believe that students learn to be more careful in their writing when being provided with feedback and it also teaches them to reread their texts before handing them in.
Corrections are made by teacher A by underlining sentences in the text with a suggestion of that there is a “noun” in the text that is misused or incorrect in the text. The students then have to find out the error by themselves. Teacher A has cut down on corrections within the text and only makes notes in the margin on persistent mistakes the first couple of times. She claims that “too much correction on the weak students’ assignments make them feel defeated so there the focus is on the basics such as verbs, spelling mistakes and word order”.

Teacher B and D explain that written tasks are underlined and corrected with remarks when the work is finished. A summary of the feedback is made at the end of the text with notes on what the teacher considers important for the student to learn and develop and what the student has done well. The feedback begins with positive feedback to motivate and ends with constructive feedback to develop the student. Teacher B states that “the focus is on the content, the structure and the language and whether the aim of the task has been fulfilled by the student or not. The language is corrected depending on whether or not the errors interfere or spoil the text”, this means that incorrect choice of words or sentence structure, or terms from the mother tongue are errors that are regarded to obscure the language and have negative effect on the reader and therefore corrected by teacher B. Teacher D provides the students with a preset feedback form before and after the task and marks what the student has achieved in terms of language use, structure, or content. “In this way students understand and seldom need to ask questions about the feedback”, teacher D claims. Moreover, both grades and feedback are given to students on the same paper.

Teacher C explains that the feedback is adapted to the student’s level of knowledge. The focus on texts lies on the content, the language and if the student has met the requirements for the task. Furthermore the written feedback is not very detailed since the text is explained later on in a discussion with the student. The written feedback is used on all written work and is based on the criteria for the task. The criteria are checked off depending on whether the student has achieved the criterion and comments are made with both positive and constructive criticism. The teacher also makes comments within the text and abbreviations in the margin which are explained and repeated regularly. The teacher often wants the student to choose a level of difficulty and focus on the aspect they find hard until the next written assignment. Teacher C explains that students often want overall feedback and response on the content rather than on the language and the structure. Feedback on the two latter aspects is mostly wanted by the “good” students. Teacher C claims that she makes the students reflect on their own work and the writing process. This helps them in their realization of their learning.
The teacher D provides feedback if the students want it. The teacher believes students develop when being provided with feedback and is of the opinion that it helps them in their learning process. Feedback is used by teacher D “to make the students aware of their achievements, to make them understand why they received a certain grade and to improve their English”. The teacher tries to focus on some aspects that are regarded as important for the student to learn and encourages the students to read the feedback and learn from their errors. Improvements are indicated to the students to show them that their English is progressing. The teacher believes that some students save the feedback to make sure the same mistakes are not made again.

Students do not understand the impact of feedback

All teachers claim that students are more interested in the grading than the feedback but still combine both aspects in the students’ papers.

A minority of the students use their feedback to develop teacher A claims. Students that the teacher follows in all three years make progress which leads teacher A to believe that students develop their English when provided with feedback. Furthermore teacher A states that students that are studying English C are interested and motivated to learn English, which could have an influence on the effects of feedback. “I do want them to learn from their mistakes and also to see encouragement and for them to see that I’m really paying attention to what they’re writing about”. Feedback is a process, so for the students to understand the impact of feedback they must be aware that their development requires some time. Students are not paying attention to the criteria for certificates and all students do not learn from feedback since they do not have the ambition or the energy.

Teacher B finds written feedback a good learning strategy but does not experience that the students pay attention to the feedback and learn from it “I do not think that the time spent on writing feedback is worth it. I do not see much progress in the students”. She continues explaining that she still provides feedback since she wants to try to improve the students’ abilities but believes that students need more time to work with feedback. The teacher claims that they have been working with feedback quite a lot but the effect of it is missing. The teacher believes that students rewrite their texts solely to get higher grades. Finished and graded written tasks and essays with feedback are either discarded or not even looked at.

Teacher C explains that she uses feedback to acknowledge the students’ abilities and for them to realise their mistakes and develop. Teachers are obliged to try their best to guide and
support the students in order for them to achieve the results desired. Nevertheless students do not always understand the impact of feedback and leave their texts with feedback that is unread. Due to this teacher C states that teachers must decide if the time spent on feedback is worth it in some cases.

Teacher C explains that students want and demand feedback on their work. She is otherwise faced with students who argue that “if I only get VG on this text and there is no feedback how am I supposed to know what to do to get a higher grade?” (VG is the grade that stands for “pass with distinction”). Teacher C believes that all students learn from feedback if it is acted on. Especially grammar and sentence structure are, according to the teacher, believed to be aspects of learning that could be improved. Teacher C continues explaining that students that are interested in learning English tend to be provided with more feedback than students that do not use the feedback and are not motivated to learn and make progress. The amount of feedback provided is also adjusted to the time the students have spent writing the texts. Despite of this teacher C does not notice any particular progress in the students and is of the opinion that progress is not necessarily dependent on feedback. She believes that progression depends on student motivation and the willingness to learn English. The students do not always receive grades on their written work but only feedback occasionally.

Teacher D asks the students if they want feedback or if they are only interested in the grade. Students that do not aim for a higher grade and are not very interested in English are not provided with the same amount of feedback as students who are motivated to learn and develop. The students that want to be provided with feedback are the ones that want to improve their English. Teacher D is of the opinion that students that want to improve act on the feedback and learn from it. The feedback is provided after the work is done and mainly on essays and analyses.

**Written feedback is provided with a discussion**

The written feedback is provided individually to the student with a discussion of the assignment and the feedback to make sure the student has understood. When providing feedback the teachers talk to the students about their performance and how they experienced it. The discussion is a vital tool for the students’ to recognise their abilities and for improvement. Teacher A states that students do not otherwise understand what to do to improve. Teacher D, on the other hand, believes that the modules used in English are enough for the students to realise what needs improvement.
Appendix 4
An example of written feedback on an assignment

Poland

I am writing this essay because my class and I are going on a study trip to Poland. In this essay I'm going to tell you a little bit of Poland's society, like policy, EU etc.

Poland is a country who have a republic. Because of that they have a president who is a 60 year old man called Lech Kacynski. He has been the president since 2005 when he won the president election and the political party who rule the country is called The Civic Platform. Poland's parliament are divided into different parts like the Swedish, one of these two is called Sejm, it's equivalent the Swedish word “riksdag”. It has 460 seats. And part two is called Senate and in Swedish it is our government.

Some political parties in Poland are as you already know The Civic Platform which is liberal and conservative party, who in fact are EU-positive. They have other parties called Law and Justice, Polish peasant party (Piast) and The Social democracy of Poland.

The Law and Justice party is shorten PiS, it's a conservative party. The President have a twin and he is a member of this party. (Isn't he the leader of the party?)

Polish peasant party (Piast), this party is building their policies on nationalistic and Christian values.

The Social democracy of Poland is, as it sounds, a typical social democracy party.

In EU there are 27 members and Poland is one of them. They are a little bit complicated member though they won't allow abortion unless if the woman get pregnant when she get raped, or if the baby show any sign of handicap. But also if the baby or the pregnancy make a threat to the mother's health.

EU thinks that this is wrong because they aren't following the human rights, the woman have in this country nothing to say if they doesn't have any of does reasons to get an abortion.

The children in Poland starts at preschool in the age of 3, after that they go six year in
elementary school when they are 7 years old. Before they finish the 6th grade they make a test and after that they have a 3 year long gymnasium, and after that they have even 3-4 more years in something which looks like a aftergymnasium. (it's like the Swedish gymnasium)

They have also some special schools for them who quit the obligatory school, which is the first six years and the following three years, but also school for children who are mentally retarded.

Poland have a validation system for teachers which can be initiated by principal, the teacher herself or a parent. After the student have take the teacher exam it can't just go out and search for a job, no, they have to be a "training teacher" first and then get a promotion to be a professional teacher.

Poland is as I said before a republic and their government look like ours only that they have more seats in the Sejm. Their president is called Lech Kacynski and the party that rule the country is The Civic Platform.

Poland has had many different parties. All remained me of the Swedish, but it does them well in most countries.

Poland is one of the members in EU, only that they have an other view of abortion, they are against it.

They have 9 years of compulsory school, but they called it different from Swedish school. We go 9 years in elementary school while they are going 6 years in elementary school and then 3 years of gymnasium. So they actually got 2 times in gymnasium. And of course they have special schools for the mentally retarded and for those who quit the elementary school earlier. Which I think is good because according to me alla humans have the right to go in school.

The teacher must be a sort of "training teacher" before it can be a professional one and I think it's good because then they know if it's a good teacher they are employs. So they just don't
take the first one who search for the job who maybe is lousy at it.

Conclusion? / Ending?

You have mentioned many interesting aspects of the society in Poland compared to Sweden. However, you need to check the language as well as the structure one more time.

Grade: 6