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Student and Instructor Responses to E-Feedback

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This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

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Student and Instructor Responses to E-Feedback

By

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Introduction

In response to an environment in which writing takes place daily in various electronic and mobile contexts, composition instructors are increasingly turning to digital means of responding to student writing. Creating this feedback makes up a large part of the writing instructor's job, and these comments carry with them many perceived consequences; likelihood of student revision, justification of grades, and support of a productive dialogue between student and instructor can be depend upon successful feedback practices. When I was about to enter the classroom as an instructor for the first time about a year ago, how to comment on papers, exactly what kinds of comments (and how many) to use, and whether to respond on paper or online were issues that kept me up at night. Everyone I spoke with had a different story about what works best. Teachers' choices governing this task seem to be driven as much by lore as by the field's research, especially when considering how to best use technology to serve instructor purposes when leaving feedback. This study investigates student and instructor attitudes about feedback delivered in the digital environment, since the environment itself matters to how instructors give comments and to how students receive and use them.

The technologies used for writing response have rhetorical properties of their own based on the ways they present text and the options they offer students and teachers. It is important to remember that when instructors distribute e-feedback (comments left digitally within students' electronic documents), the technologies' interfaces stand to present messages to students via built-in functions. For example, feedback software may dictate how instructor comments show up on students' drafts; often, users don't get to control these kinds of display features. The visual

setup of these documents is different from the long-trusted white sheet of paper; these responses have windows and options and colors, and students will not disregard these meanings (even if they are largely unconscious of them) since more than ever before, students are living in a world of visual argument (George 1445).

Today, teachers choose from many options for responding to student writing, including commenting on printed papers by hand, returning Microsoft Word files with in-text comments via email or course management systems, and using Web-based platforms like Turnitin's GradeMark, which collect student papers, allow instructors to leave comments and rubric feedback, and return papers to students entirely online—no downloading or uploading is necessary. Some feedback platforms have also begun to offer alternative modalities like voice recording to instructors wishing to deliver comments by other means than text. Any of these choices has consequences for us and for our students based on the communicativity of the user interface and on both students' and instructors' ease of use; what may be an advantage for one student may be a disadvantage for another. It is therefore important when making these decisions to consider student impressions of the delivery of feedback. Many instructors decide how to respond to student writing keeping in mind other concerns besides student needs; issues like efficiency, ethics, and convenience naturally factor into the eventual adoption of specific feedback technologies. Student priorities when it comes to instructor feedback on their writing may not align with instructor priorities.

This study provides further insight into how instructors decide on the methods used to respond to student writing and whether these criteria match what students want from this feedback. What are instructors' considerations when they adopt e-feedback practices? Do these considerations align or conflict with student preferences for how they receive feedback? How

does the rhetorical content of these technologies (visual presentation and choices offered to users) affect the ways both teachers and students use them?

To address a research gap, this study focuses on *e-feedback*, which is in-document feedback from instructors distributed via the Web to students (also called digital feedback or electronic feedback) in two of the formats most widely used by college composition instructors: comments added to Microsoft Word files and comments left in GradeMark, the essay annotation and grading platform embedded within Turnitin.com. The former requires that instructors download student files, annotate them, and then upload them to send back to the student. The latter is a Web-only commenting platform that allows instructors to sign in and comment in the "cloud"; files remain in the online environment. This study does not differentiate between formative and summative comments since often comments act as both; students may have the opportunity to revise their writing or to apply the suggestions to future writing.

By comparing student impressions of e-feedback with the criteria instructors use to make decisions about what technologies to use when commenting, my goal is to give teachers a tool to make better-informed choices. The number of technological options for responding to student writing today didn't face new teachers a generation ago, so other teachers' lore alone can't always help; with this study, I aim to illuminate the potential advantages and consequences of adopting e-feedback for the response process.

Literature Review

No one seems to dispute any longer that students will *compose* digitally in college composition courses. Whether it's just lower stakes writing (blogs instead of journals, discussion boards to augment in-class discussions, etc.) or formal essays, at least a few assignments in most writing classes will be conducted online or with composing software. What does remain under

debate, however, is the best way to give feedback on student work digitally. Called "e-feedback" by Frank Tuzi (217), it differs from traditional handwritten teacher feedback on printed papers in that comments are typed within electronic documents and may be copied and pasted instead of written originally for each individual situation.

Teachers "deliver" e-feedback through different means than traditional paper feedback. Online annotation technologies became widely available at the beginning of the 2000s. Since then, scholars looked at the ways these technologies—like the ones that make up a vital part of any electronic response software—offered rhetorical choices to users that differed both from handwritten annotations and from one another. Readers may respond inline, with "sticky notes," with footnotes, and so forth, all interactivity options inspired by on-paper annotation (Wolfe 484-5). Each method has the potential to communicate differently. For example, in a Microsoft Word document, inline text of a particular color may carry different significance than inserted comments resembling Post-It notes or "tracking changes," where another user's modifications to the document are highlighted and shown to the original author.

The visual elements of these platforms are more than superficial. Students have to retrieve feedback through a series of screens and Web interfaces, features with usability considerations and rhetorical implications. An "interface" is where the person meets the technology; according to Teena A.M. Carnegie, it "facilitates and defines interaction, and it takes both concrete and abstract form" (165). Researchers initially used the term to mean software and hardware through which a human user interacts with a computer, but "[a]s it has evolved, the concept of the interface has come to include the cognitive and emotional aspects of the user's experience" (Laurel qtd. in Carnegie 165). These interfaces, many scholars argue, should not be

"invisible" if we are to be aware of their rhetorical content and pedagogical potential (Wysocki and Jasken; DePew and Lettner-Rust; Oviatt).

In their 1994 article, Anne Francis Wyoscki and Julia I. Jasken foreground this issue of interface "invisibility," and the composition community still struggles with it today. The authors argue for greater purposefulness in selecting programs to use for the classroom, since the choices they offer to students may have unintended implications based on the literacies of users and the choices presented to them. For example, a student who has never used Microsoft Word's "comments" feature may not know she could need to select an option called "show markup" to see instructor feedback on her paper. For this student, there are no teacher comments present, and she might not be comfortable enough with the technology to ask the right questions. To this point, Wysocki's chapter in *Writing New Media* reminds us that no material (be it pen and paper or particular computer document design) is an empty vessel; our materials imbue the content of our communications with additional meaning.

Digitally, the look, setup, and availability of options for giving and receiving comments affect the compositional choices students and instructors will make, as well as the meanings they glean. As is certainly the case within e-feedback platforms, Richard Andrews argues in *A Theory of Contemporary Rhetoric* that "we need a new theory of rhetoric because we have come to realize that words alone do not represent the full range of communicational resources available to us to make and convey meaning" (6). This assertion suggests interfaces may influence the very shape of ideas. In their look at websites reddit and 4chan after the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings, Liza Potts and Angela Harrison argue that "interfaces, by their forms of delivery (technology type), memory (recall), arrangement (structure), and style (of content) are

rhetorically constructed and impact the methods participants use to share information" (1). In this case, the kind of "vessel" offered to users for communicative content on each site made a difference to the nature of their compositions; it became a generative element.

This kind of influence is important given goals concerning what instructor feedback on student writing is supposed to do. If, as Nancy Sommers writes, students "in this exchange [are] to be open to an instructor's comments, reading and hearing their responses not as personal attacks or as isolated moments in a college writing career but, rather, as instructive and portable words to take with them to the next assignment, across the drafts," then their reaction to the way that feedback is presented to them matters ("Across the Drafts" 250). For this purpose, e-feedback interfaces must be not only helpful and welcoming, but also easily usable and intuitive. If they're not, they risk reinforcing the kinds of pitfalls typical of all types of digital communications—and their very digital nature can change how both students and instructors react to them. For example, "flaming" is a phenomenon invited by delivery platform "in which people engage in inappropriately emotional responses in e-mail, a written modality that seems to create a more emotionally charged environment than in its hardcopy equivalents" (Sproull and Kiesler cited in Kim 309). It is important to remember that "[a]lthough online modalities share some attributes with handwriting and face-to-face feedback …the changed combinations of attributes can alter the dynamics of the modalities" (Kim 309). No communication is unchanged by existing in a digital environment versus an analog one, or for that matter, in one digital environment versus another.

These varied interfaces are subject to their own commonplaces just as they may reinforce the feedback paradigms instructors deliver through them. Researchers of graphic user interface

design assert that interfaces prove one of the hardest places to innovate within technology, since users become accustomed to patterns they expect. “Despite mimicry, creativity, new technology, and a steadily growing need,” write Adream Blair-Early and Mike Zender, “interfaces are mired in paradigms established decades ago at a time when user interface was more a computer novelty than a part of everyday life” (85). The ways users interact with screens may be changing—touch screens are increasing in availability at the expense of mouse and keyboard technology, for example—but unless the screen interface is intuitive, the person interacting with the screen may not take advantage of the options offered by the software. Users of e-feedback look to the interface to offer familiar options, and they may inadvertently resist features that seem unfamiliar or progressive within both the interface and the content of the feedback.

To avoid this resistance and to be considered effective for the task of delivering instructor comments to students on their writing, e-feedback programs, software, or websites must be attractive, predictable, and logically organized. Contrary, perhaps, to assumptions about what instructors and students value, in studies, attractiveness was the most important feature of evaluated interfaces, as it “gives [users] a sense of perceived satisfaction even though the product may not inherently possess qualities that satisfy users" (Nathan and Yeow 156). Attractive interfaces are uncluttered, clear about site options and goals, and may employ a pleasing color scheme or easy-to-read typefaces. Attractiveness can mask or distract from deeper difficulties with an e-feedback platform, such as reinforcing corrective versus constructive response practices.

Beyond this quality, though, any interface must possess effective organization of material; this is called information architecture, and it "enables users to understand and move through a system and get the information they need without getting frustrated due to confusion”

(Park 160). The interface's usability for students can determine the depth of their understanding of the feedback they receive, and, as my own study's survey results will suggest, their level of ease with the technology may contribute to how heavily they rely on this feedback later.

Moreover, the options e-feedback interfaces present to their users may contribute to power relationships like those found in the face-to-face classroom; that is, someone's role determines his or her operational choices and ability to surveil other users. Carnegie argues that technology interfaces guide us through the tasks we wish to accomplish online, and that the "modes of interactivity [the interface] deploys are capable of enabling empowerment and enacting rhetorical patterns of control" (164). For example, instructors who use Turnitin's GradeMark are presented with options inviting them to submit student papers for plagiarism detection, when perhaps they only wanted a means of giving feedback on student papers online—this is my intent when I use it my own classroom. Given this choice, though, instructors may elect to enable plagiarism detection since it is easily accessed (and, sometimes, institutionally encouraged).

Conversely, students are not able to make such choices easily, and the options presented to them when they create a Turnitin login and password do not include the ability to enable or disable plagiarism detection or to make many other choices (whether they may submit to the same assignment more than once, whether they may view their own originality reports, and so on) reserved for those with instructor status. Realistically, students are also not likely to read the full terms and conditions they agree to when they create their logins with the site; they may therefore be unaware of the ways their writing might be used. Though of course these power differentials have long been noticed in the classroom—Sommers explored instructor

"appropriation" of student texts as early as 1982—it is important to recognize who has the ability to make decisions about where and how intellectual property is used and to view the work of others ("Responding to Student Writing" 353).

The idea of surveillance in this sense—that of being privy through grading software to work that isn't one's own intellectual property—is picked up in a body of work that is critical of Turnitin and other plagiarism detection technologies, which often go hand-in-hand with e-feedback (Vie; Crow). In agreement with a CCCC Intellectual Property Caucus position statement, Stephanie Vie argues for discipline-wide resistance to plagiarism checkers by introducing rhetorical analysis of the platforms themselves into curriculum, again referring to the power differentials reinforced by them (CCCC-IP Caucus). Students are used to following teacher instruction blindly and "may hesitate to articulate their concerns about uploading their writing to a plagiarism detection site with their instructor; furthermore, students may lack the contextual knowledge necessary to understand just what exactly they are being asked to do" (Vie 5).

Additionally, Angela Crow explores students' (and instructors') abilities to opt out of the Web grading platforms (particularly for plagiarism detection) adopted by our institutions and the problematic restrictions thereof, both administratively and in terms of unintentional and unavoidable power inequality. All digital submission systems come with privacy and intellectual property concerns that users frequently don't have the agency to address. Currently, however, institutions and instructors (myself included) do not always foreground these issues when deciding whether to implement these feedback methods.

Further, students arrive in college composition courses with years of experience receiving teacher feedback, and therefore may seek out in e-feedback the instructor "correction" of their writing they expect to see. Designers of education-specific feedback technologies like Turnitin also may be influenced by these paradigms as they seek to meet instructor expectations of their software. Generally, the ways people construct schemas based on personal history with specific kinds of visual communication provide many of the premises for potential arguments to be understood from technology, including e-feedback technology. According to David S. Birdsell and Leo Groarke, "Visual culture provides the broad master narratives of design which are the background for more specific visual (or for that matter, verbal) texts which perpetuate or challenge those narratives" (7). Some e-feedback platforms may perpetuate familiar narratives in teacher-student paper-writing relationships: the student turns in the paper to the instructor, the instructor gives suggestions for how to make the paper better in the margins and likely at the beginning or end of the essay and/or decides what grade it receives.

Indeed, these response patterns have elements within them that students and teachers have both come to expect. For example, marks that identify errors of grammar or syntax—like "awk." (for "awkward,") or "WC" (for "word choice")—have long been mainstays of teacher feedback, and are provided automatically for teacher use within Turnitin's GradeMark. These can be interpreted as one of Birdsell and Groarke's "visual commonplaces," kinds of communication delivered visually that readers know to expect and to interpret due to the frequency with which they have historically seen them. Students expecting responses like these may resist e-feedback platforms that do not facilitate them, as the kinds of feedback given instead will be unfamiliar; alternatively, students may interpret these marks too narrowly, changing instructor identification of lower order concerns within writing response into directives

for how to "fix" the essay. Instructors' feedback practices, though not dictated by the interface, may be influenced by it, and this influence may be interpreted differently by students with varied educational histories.

If e-feedback risks so many potential pitfalls, why do so many instructors decide to use it anyway? For one thing, digital response offers different settings and procedures than traditional feedback: commenting via tablet computers and other mobile devices, carrying only a computer instead of stacks of physical papers, and so on. These varied commutative environments may better mirror the ways both students and instructors compose in their daily lives, increasing the relevance of the response process for both parties. Further, teacher lore seems to associate digital feedback with speed of response—many of the instructors I surveyed associated the two—and researchers like Nikki Litherland Baker acknowledge the need for greater efficiency in responding to student writing because of increasing teacher workload and class size. However, instructors agree that efficiency should not come at the cost of useful, fair feedback (Sommers; Moneyhun 326).

Efficient feedback means more than the "rubber stamping" feedback popular in essay "correction" rather than "response." Thoughtful comments matter, despite "skepticism that students don't even read the comments; all they're interested in is the grade" (Straub 356). These thoughtful comments may be delivered though whatever method instructors choose; that is, none of the platforms for leaving feedback—hard copy, word processing programs, annotation software packaged with plagiarism detection websites, and so on—necessarily dictate what commenting philosophy the instructor subscribes to. For example Richard Haswell's "Minimal Marking" strategy could potentially work on any of them; the feedback platform in this case acts

as a delivery method alone. However, pre-set options like those included in Turnitin's GradeMark for marking grammar errors could potentially suggest certain choices instructors might not otherwise consider. The feedback platform, in certain instances, could affect feedback practices, even in situations when those practices might not as fully reflect instructors' feedback philosophies as they might like.

Though the assumption has been that technologies can make feedback more efficient, Gail E. Hawisher and Charles Moran (joined by Michael R. Neal) instead argue that online responses should take the same amount of time as traditional ones if done properly. Baker, too, advocates a situated, socially constructed view of providing feedback on student texts rather than as a task isolated from its context. Instructors react to a variety of social and professional factors when picking the feedback method to use, and these elements combine to inform decisions about implementing technology. In his book *Writing Assessment and the Revolution in Digital Texts and Technologies,* Neal shares Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe's views that technology is neither as positive as some purport nor as negative as some caution; the pedagogy must drive the technology, not the other way around. He corroborates Dana R. Ferris's conclusions when he discusses the ways technologies might force instructors to adopt practices they might not believe in pedagogically, such as enabling plagiarism detection or using drag-and-drop stock comments.

However, when used creatively, these technologies may offer some new pedagogical strategies. Vivien Rolfe studied whether the originality reports generated when student papers are submitted to Turnitin can be used as formative feedback; she concluded that it did encourage revision, but did not decrease incidences of plagiarism. Additionally, e-feedback may support student revision in ways oral or in-person feedback might not. In his 2011 study, Tuzi found that L2 students attempted more revision when receiving digital comments on their writing than from

writing center and oral consultations. Digital response may be more relevant than printed response to students who feel more comfortable composing digitally than on paper or who want to be able to use online translation or reference tools when revising their writing. While this generalization by no means applies to every student, some populations may prefer e-feedback more than others based on their communicative habits and needs.

Unfortunately, preference can be easily asked about, but productive response processes are much more difficult to measure. Further studies investigating student opinions of types of feedback (typically content rather than modality) have employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, using both surveys and collected artifacts (Morozov; El Ebyary and Windeatt; Rolfe). In a 2011 article, Andrew Morozov explored the ways students interpret teacher feedback on essays, concluding that their interpretation can't be fully predicted by the teacher doing the commenting. This finding is corroborated by Colleen Vojak and colleagues, who argue that as much as we look into technologies themselves, "the pedagogical effectiveness of these programs may hinge on the purposes and the extent to which they are used" (106). That is, the content of teachers' comments may be the most important element in the effectiveness of feedback, however it is delivered.

Though e-feedback-specific research hasn't so far concentrated on teachers' choice of digital methods, instructors do have a body of research advocating thoughtful adoption of classroom technology in general to draw from (Hawisher and Selfe; Hawisher and Moran; Brunk-Chavez and Arrigucci). First to consider the consequences of using digital platforms in the writing classroom, Hawisher and Selfe, writing in 1991, caution against using classroom technologies like word processors and other computer software without considering the negative rhetorical features potentially embedded in their presentation: difficult-to-read text, implications

of particular colors, and so forth. Criticizing previous studies that only explored the positive potential of digital technologies, Hawisher and Selfe advocate weighing both positives and negatives of using these technologies in composition classrooms.

Later in the 1990s, as technology adoption in the writing classroom spread, Hawisher teamed with Moran to give further advice encouraging levelheadedness (as opposed to excessive excitement in favor of technology) when making decisions about responding to students online. In any adoption of classroom technology, "digital divide" concerns surface; that is, not all students (or instructors) will respond the same way to digital feedback and assessment because they come from different backgrounds and arrive in our classrooms with different levels of digital literacy. Additionally, concerns like some students' inability to access Word comments may be caused by their lack of access to the proper software on home computers. As students switch more exclusively to mobile computing (often looking at instructional material on their phones, for example), the risk of certain file features simply not showing up has increased. Concerns like these are now formalized in NCTE position statements like the "Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment" and the "Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing," which steer instructors toward considering pedagogical needs before adopting technology for the sake of novelty alone. Knowing the field's consensus, that technology should be treated as just another pedagogical tool instead of a crutch, is one way teachers can navigate the selection of technology for responding to student writing. However, in order to make informed, thoughtful decisions about what will work for them and for their students, instructors must have research on the particular implications of specific types of e-feedback to draw from. Whereas other scholars have investigated effects of the content of instructor comments, this

study will address whether the way feedback is delivered affects its content and its usefulness, for both students and instructors. In the next chapter, I discuss how looking at e-feedback platforms rhetorically can contextualize instructor choices and student responses to feedback.

Chapter 2

Visual and Rhetorical Analysis of E-Feedback Platforms

To unpack the consequences of an instructor's decision to adopt a particular method of returning feedback on student writing, it is necessary to take a look at the visual and rhetorical content of e-feedback platforms themselves. Understanding the features of these interfaces will help contextualize respondents' reactions to them. In my experience as a graduate student and teaching assistant at KSU, Microsoft Word comments and Turnitin's GradeMark feedback were the two most widely used e-feedback platforms I encountered. These platforms boast many similarities with and differences from each other and from printed, handwritten feedback. Instructors need to be aware of the rhetorical features of these platforms, since when they choose to employ one, they also choose how feedback will look, how it is accessed, how it is created, and how it is used, among other unconscious decisions.

The rhetorical analysis methodology Stephanie Vie advocates students pursue in her article "A Pedagogy of Resistance to Plagiarism Detection Technologies," in which students do analysis projects of plagiarism detection technology to better understand their own educational agency, helped me to consider the ways student and instructor choices and preferences are influenced by the options presented to them by software and website designers. Like Wysocki and Jasken's "What Should Be an Unforgettable Face…," with this study I foreground deliberate adoption of classroom technology that resists letting it remain "invisible." That is, conclusions drawn from survey results should facilitate "eyes-open" evaluation of technology used for feedback. Whereas, as Simon Penny points out, "intuitiveness" and "invisibility" are often interchangeable when we speak positively about interface design, in classes that incorporate instruction about rhetoric, "invisibility" can be a negative descriptor, since it implies a rhetorical

"blindness" (qtd. in Wysocki and Jasken 30). If instructors want to select feedback methods rhetorically, they should consider how students may respond to the delivery of their comments as receivers of arguments about their writing performance. Students will react to these arguments in different ways, depending on their backgrounds with writing instruction and with technology, generally.

Certainly, the features offered in Turnitin's GradeMark and in Microsoft Word may privilege certain users because of differing levels of comfort with technology or access to particular software, but, more immediately, technology doesn't just by virtue of its adoption indicate pedagogical innovation. Instructors may look to technology to innovate because of how large a group of goals responding to student writing is expected to serve. Responses should be constructive and formative, whether they're accompanied by terminal grades or not. Responses should be neither too harsh nor too lenient. Responses should be clear about expectations and encourage students to do their best work. The daunting task of closely reading and responding to ever-increasing numbers of papers should go as quickly as possible and still allow instructors time to plan lessons and carry out other scholarly work. None of these concerns, unfortunately, will be addressed solely by the decision to adopt e-feedback technology. Rather, e-feedback becomes a delivery method for rhetoric like any other, not responsible for the whole of the message, but rather one piece that is interconnected with the rhetorical whole.

In this chapter, I concentrate on Microsoft Word comments and on Turnitin's GradeMark feedback, discussing, like Vie and Wysocki and Jasken, how the choices instructors make with technology have consequences beyond convenience. These interfaces, however, are not all the same. While Word likely doesn't intend an argumentative message with its interface other than the usability and utility of its product in multiple environments, given that it is to be useful to as

many kinds of users as possible, GradeMark is a for-profit, education-specific corporation using bright colors and bold design elements to make its point, that instructors and institutions should purchase its product licenses.

Both Microsoft and Turnitin's parent companies—the rhetorical artifacts' "authors"—are for-profit corporations. Though the technology used to support printing is also manufactured by for-profit companies, rarely is that corporate signature left so noticeably on the product in analog forms as in digital ones. The repercussions of the intent of both products can be felt throughout the user experience, both for instructors and for students.

I should mention that the task of analyzing user interface differs today from even five years ago. Both of these programs specifically offer modified interfaces for different computer operating systems and for mobile devices. For the purposes of this study, we can assume strong similarities between the appearance of GradeMark, for example, in different web browsers, and for MS Word on a computer running an Apple operating system, a PC running Windows, and a tablet or cell phone with the mobile version of word installed on it, though of course differences exist.

Analysis of MS Word Interface

Word processing software like Microsoft Word is manufactured to serve multiple purposes (and, therefore, different audiences). Though certainly the corporations making these products understand that the software will be used for educational purposes by many buyers, education is by no means the only—or even the primary—intention behind its functionality. The Microsoft Corporation's Word product website makes no mention of education—or, specifically of business, for that matter ("Word"). Microsoft's new Word Templates site features 28 categories in which users may download free templates to act as starting points for their projects.

Only one category has to do with education—and just two of these are blank MLA and APA formatted papers. The rest are CVs, calendars, reports, and letter frameworks, among other general-use documents ("Templates for Word"). The colors, typefaces, and general appearance of comments left on student writing in MS Word are customizable, but it shouldn't be forgotten that many users will likely rely upon factory defaults. These defaults were not selected in consultation with composition research—their use in our classes, therefore, should be looked at critically. Further, Word offers users several “view” options—draft view, outline view, notebook view, print view, publishing view, and focus view, visible on the bottom left corner of the document window—which mimic the layout and formatting of other modalities. Students may choose to use any of these views, and this changes the appearance of the document; instructors have no control over how students will choose to view comments.

A typical Microsoft Word document appears (until settings are changed) as a white document on a grey-blue background, hedged by a “toolbar” at the top of the page (tabs include “Home,” “Layout,” “Document Elements,” “Tables,” “Charts,” “SmartArt,” and “Review”). When instructors leave comments for students in MS Word files, they may choose from several options for doing so. I chose in this study to investigate student responses to the "Review" feature, which allows a user to leave "comments," accessed via a yellow button resembling a Post-It Note, in the margins corresponding to highlighted portions of student text, since this option is widely used in composition classes.

Instructors may set the color of the comment from among sixteen options; they may also allow the default setting of putting the instructor's name and the timestamp of the comment at the top of each note. When an instructor comments on large portions of text or many portions back-to-back, much of the student's original writing appear highlighted in a color such as red, yellow,

blue, green, or turquoise (see fig. 1). Since colors like red have been documented in psychological studies to elicit negative emotional reactions in participants, this choice of comment color is not without consequence. Researchers Sandrine Gil and Ludovic Le Bigot write, "even the very subtle presence of a red feature in the environment can be detrimental in an achievement context" (2). Since Word leaves choices like these up to the user, it is possible to tailor commenting options into more optimal appearances for supportive feedback; however, instructors must deliberately make these choices, since they again deviate from software defaults.

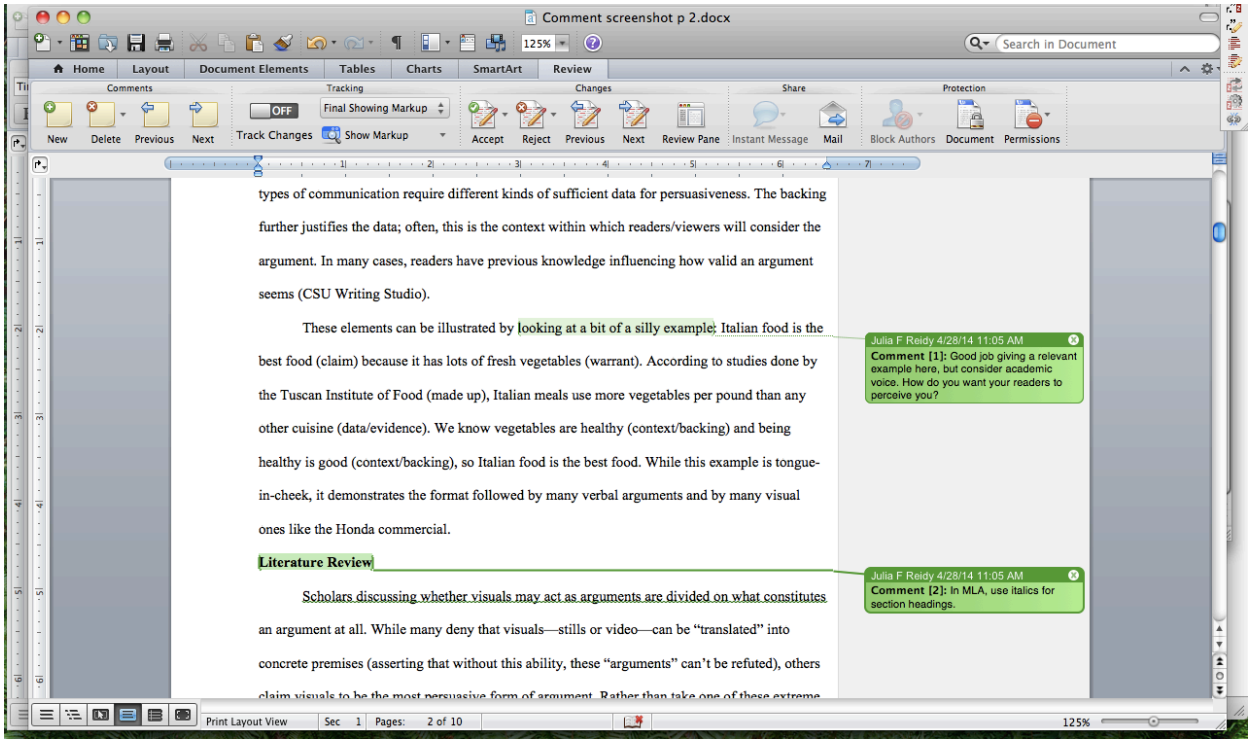

Fig. 1. Comments left in Microsoft Word for Mac 2011.

Instructors highlight the relevant portion of student text, select the "New" button the "Review" toolbar at the top of the window, and a line appears from the highlighted text to the right margin, where a bubble of the chosen color with the word "Comment" is followed by instructor writing (see fig. 1). As the teacher continues to add more feedback, the "stack" of comments accumulating in a column to the right of the text creates the appearance of almost a

second complete document within the original document. When this piece is read as a whole, it runs the risk of acting as more of a “corrective” monologue than a dialogue between instructor and student, unless, of course, the student is encouraged or required to write back (though Word itself offers nowhere in its interface to do this easily). Unlike other e-feedback platforms that do not “stack” commentary in one column in this way, MS Word's automatic placement of these comment bubbles risks the creation of a secondary document by the instructor. This consequence may conflict with composition researchers’ suggestions to avoid commenting excessively, as it does not support student growth and may result in the “mental dazzle of information overload” (Haswell 601).

The word “review” itself suggests passing judgment on the original document. However, when writers receive feedback via these comments, they may choose to revise original documents as they see fit; the instructor has not disrupted the original text itself. Therefore, this is the least invasive of the three ways instructors interact with student texts via MS Word.

The next way instructors may use MS Word to leave feedback is with the "Track Changes" feature. In this method, the user activates a "switch" in the "Review" toolbar to make every edit performed by the instructor visible to the student, highlighted, along with a note in the margin about what was changed and the option to the student of accepting (by pressing a button at the top displaying a green checkmark) or rejecting (by pressing a button at the top displaying a red “X”) the change the instructor has made (see fig. 2 below). Instructor-added words appear underlined (often in a color like blue); deleted words get a note off to the side with a bold introduction explaining what the instructor has done and at what time: "Deleted: word." Instructors using this method have made changes to the text in the way they might while marking up hard copies of student essays; however, here, the old text has sometimes been physically

removed. Additionally, options in the "Review" toolbar allow users to choose between four versions of the paper: "Final Showing Markup," "Final," "Original Showing Markup," or "Original." The student may return to a previous version of the document, but these choices are not intuitive, and they don't remain consistent when the file is saved and opened on a different device. Therefore, when the document is sent back to the instructor, for example, the version the student wants to turn in might not be visible. In this way, the "Track Changes" feature takes away some control over the document from the student.

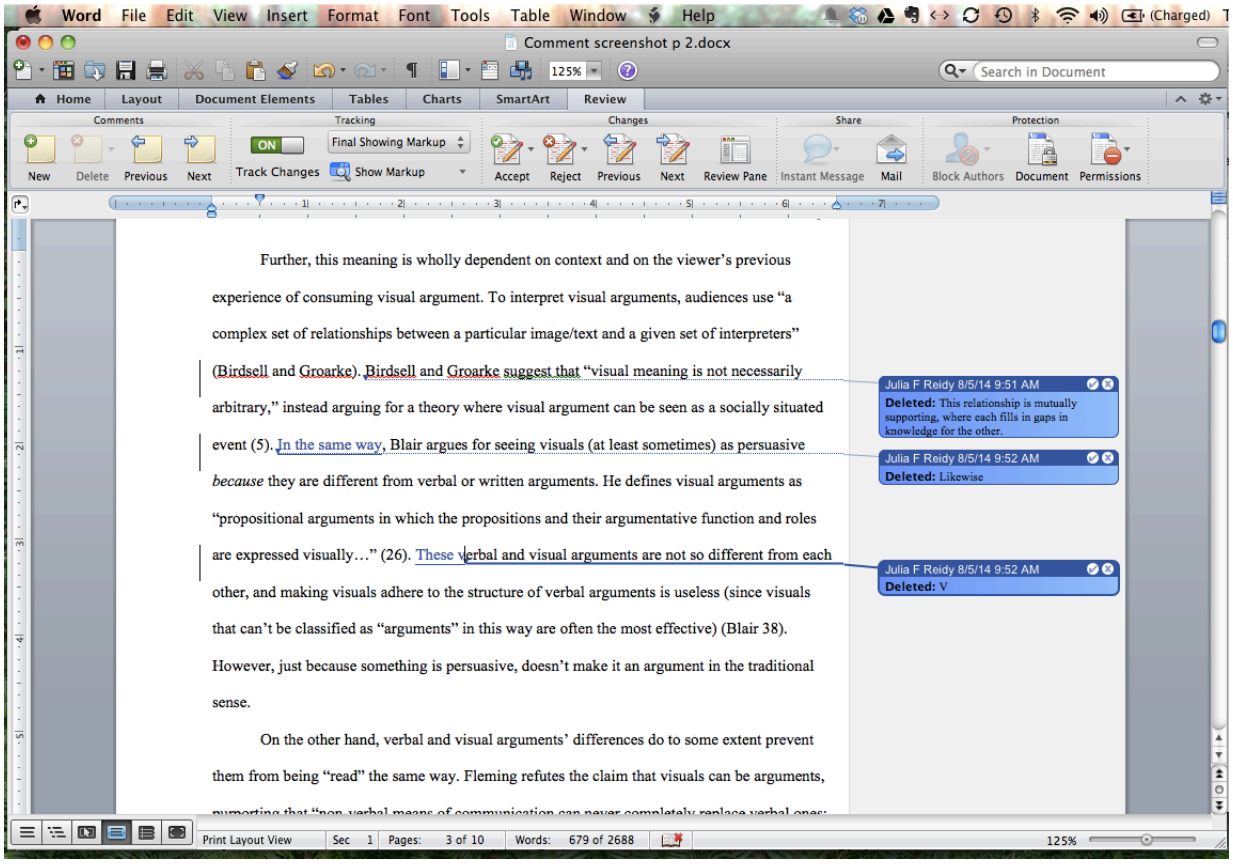

Fig. 2. The "track changes" feature in Microsoft Word, in which changes made by another user are recorded in the current document.

Further, the learning curve associated with the track changes feature may cause some students to have trouble understanding how to reclaim control of their own documents, especially if instructors don't articulate which comments are mandates and which are suggestions. As a

graduate student working on syllabi and course materials with feedback from my instructors and advisors, I personally had difficulty understanding how to accept all changes and make comments disappear for further revision. This interface is not intuitive enough that students may be expected to automatically know how to utilize the "track changes" feature.

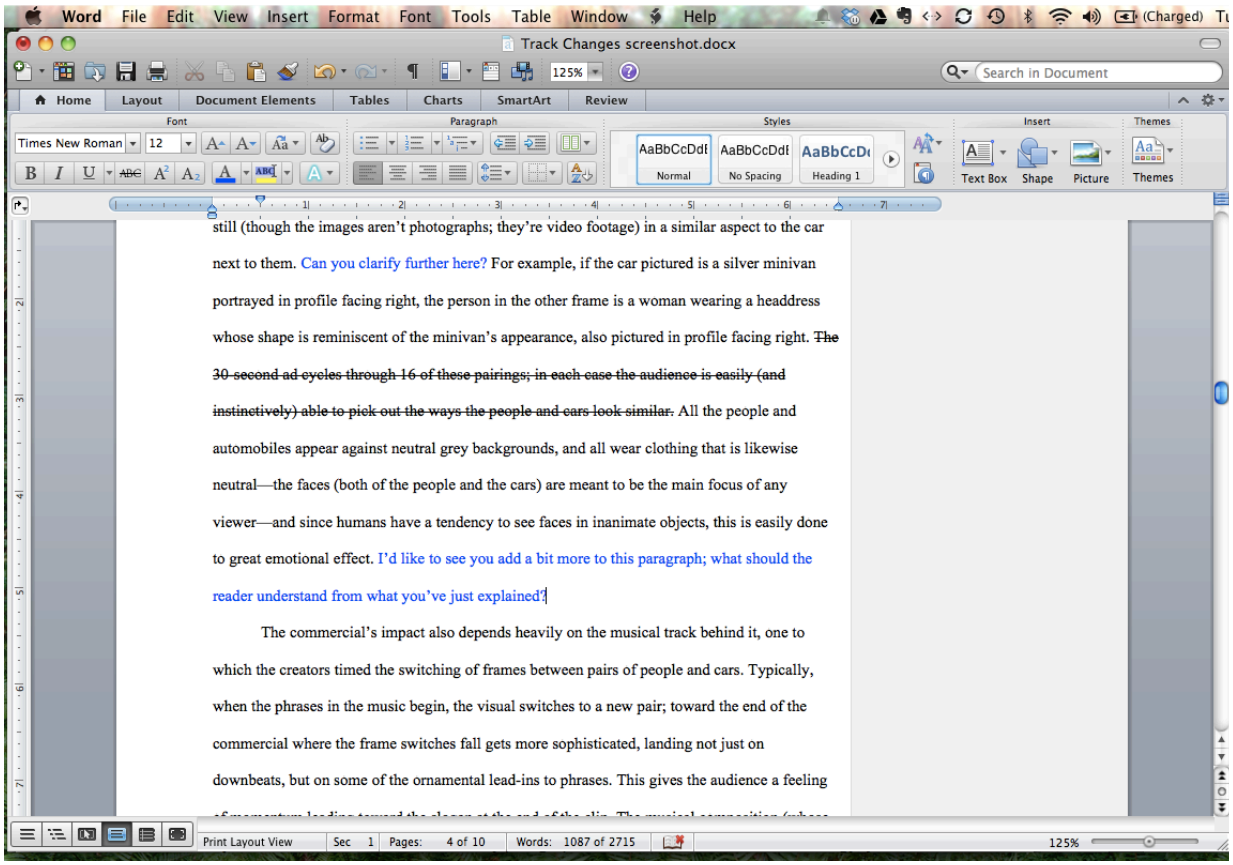

Fig. 3. Inline comments made using regular type tools in Word.

The final way instructors use MS Word to leave feedback on student texts is with in-line comments. In this method, instructors use a different color or typeface from the document's original black to simply put their own input w*ithin* the text of the document, often without the use of any special software tools other than WYSIWYG editing devices on the MS Word "Home" toolbar like bold, underline, or strike through (see fig. 3 above). Though this might have advantages for those comfortable with only the most basic of word processing software, it requires the instructor to most heavily disrupt the students' writing, asserting control over their

texts and forcing students to painstakingly delete this new content during revision if they continue working within the same document.

Perhaps the most rhetorically significant visual feature of feedback given in Microsoft Word, though, is that students will likely open the file to view it within Word itself. Once they've "entered" the document again, beginning revision doesn't require an additional step to open an additional composing program. The interface features presented to students when they view the feedback file are the same as the ones they used when they created their original document. As long as a majority of students still use MS Word to compose—a growing number use Apple's Pages or Google Docs—comments created in MS Word will have this advantage over third-party e-feedback platforms.

Analysis of GradeMark Interface

Whereas MS Word commenting suffers from perhaps too many options, Turnitin's GradeMark might be too rigid. To students who may only access Turnitin through a button in the Desire2Learn course management system (CMS) dropbox displaying their "percent match" on a plagiarism checker, for example, Turnitin is a place where they bring their work to be scrutinized for any instance of dishonesty. Further, it's a venue obviously selling this detection service to their teachers, where students may seem, in the popular lore of the composition community, "guilty until proven innocent" (Vie 11). Users of Turnitin, either as a plagiarism detection device or as a feedback platform, may use the service independently through the Turnitin.com homepage or through integration with their school's CMS. For the former group, Turnitin.com, where both instructors and students will go in order to log in, advertises events like "plagiarism education week (from copying to critical thinking)" and other features intended to increase the number of for-profit subscriptions institutions buy for instructors to use (see fig. 4). The wording

on this homepage addresses educators directly, in second person. While there are links to student and researcher services in small print, the largest headlines are very clearly aimed at instructors interested in eliminating academic dishonesty. This puts fulfilling instructors' needs first and serving students' learning second, and all these messages are delivered before anyone has even logged in. Students, seeing that the messaging isn't directed at them, may rightly get the impression they are second-class in this environment.

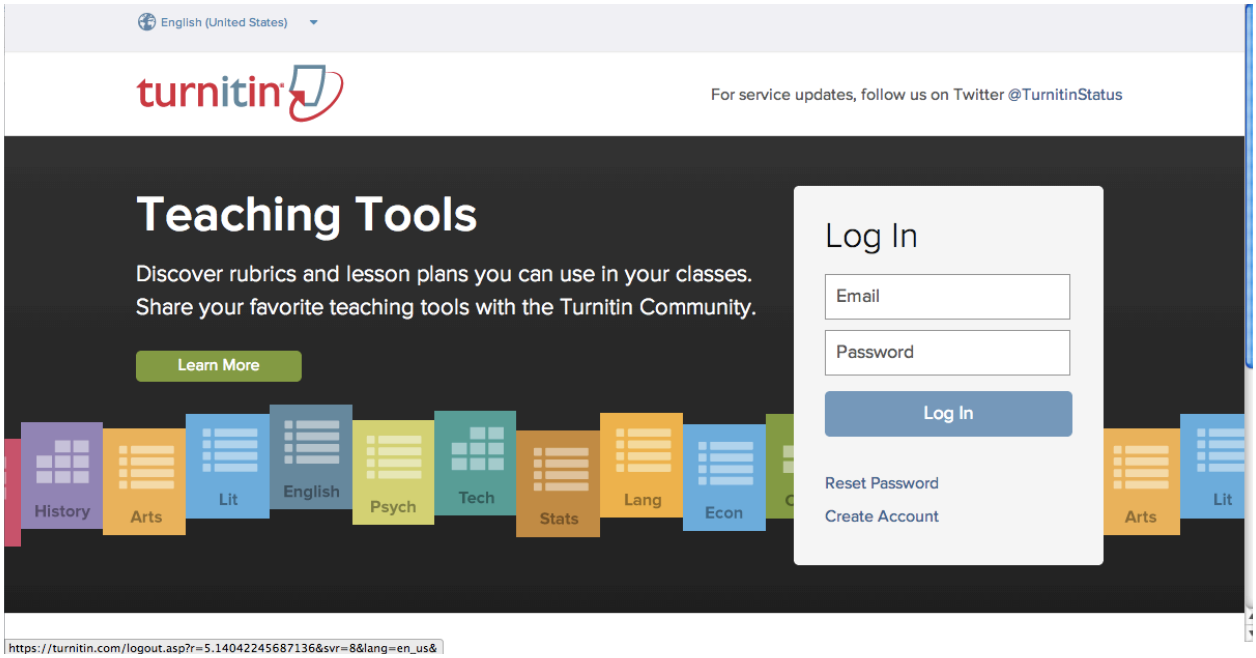

Fig. 4. Turnitin.com's login page for both instructor and student users, which prominently advertises to instructors.

Conversely, to instructors, Turnitin offers the means to "grade anything." The main page features "all-stars" who have ostensibly taught well using Turnitin, and promises a wealth of stock rubrics and other teaching tools to use (further reinforcing the one-size-fits-all mentality implied in the pre-loaded comments it provides). Its appearance "focuses largely on blue and red, reinforcing common tropes about plagiarism and integrity that seem designed to appeal to instructors and administrators in particular" (Vie 10). This red, white, and blue color scheme implies rightness and patriotism; if teachers keep students from plagiarizing by using Turnitin,

they are enforcing the rules and doing what they should for the good of all. This oversimplified idea, that plagiarism is a simple issue of student wrongdoing that must be corrected, has driven many instructors away from using Turnitin (Vie 5). It ignores the many reasons plagiarism occurs—yes, sometimes because of deliberate cheating, but other times due to misunderstanding of requirements, inexperience with using outside sources, and so on—in favor of simply catching plagiarists in the act.

Users of the GradeMark e-feedback platform part of Turnitin cannot do so without encountering these other parts of the service. A blue bar at the bottom of the main page offers links to different Turnitin-affiliated services: WriteCheck ("for students"), iThenticate ("for publishers and researchers"), Turnitin for Admissions ("for admissions professionals"), and Plagiarism.org ("for educational resources"). According to Vie, Plagiarism.org was the original name of the organization (a nonprofit) that then turned into Turnitin, which is a for-profit company (6).

Throughout the site's marketing pages, it's clear that though the company would like to seem as if it is an altruistic organization with goals only of helping students learn better, users must pay for this advantage. A bar of links at the top of the main page offers an option called "Features," which details the company's services: "Ensure Originality," "Smarter Grading," and "Streamline Peer Reviews." On this page, the most prominent element (highlighted because of its bright red color against all white and black backgrounds and text) is a button at the top right corner that reads "Get a quote." These services are great for instructors, but they're not free—again, though the company seems to want to project an image of a utopian educational community to users, we are reminded that the real goal of Turnitin is to make money, and that the company does this by adding the intellectual property of uncompensated students to their

databases when instructors allow it. Just like campus subscriptions to Microsoft Office and other software packages students can access from university computers, Turnitin can cost “several thousand dollars per institution; as a result, schools enrolled in the Turnitin suite of plagiarism detection offerings are likely to strongly encourage or even require instructors to use the service to offset their substantial monetary investment” (Vie 6). Instructors should be aware that no adoption of e-feedback technology comes without corporate influence; just as Microsoft Word enjoys dominance in the word processing field (and students who choose not to pay the several hundred dollars it costs to buy a personal license face frequent file conversion inconveniences), use of Turnitin entails buying into the business practices of a for-profit corporation.

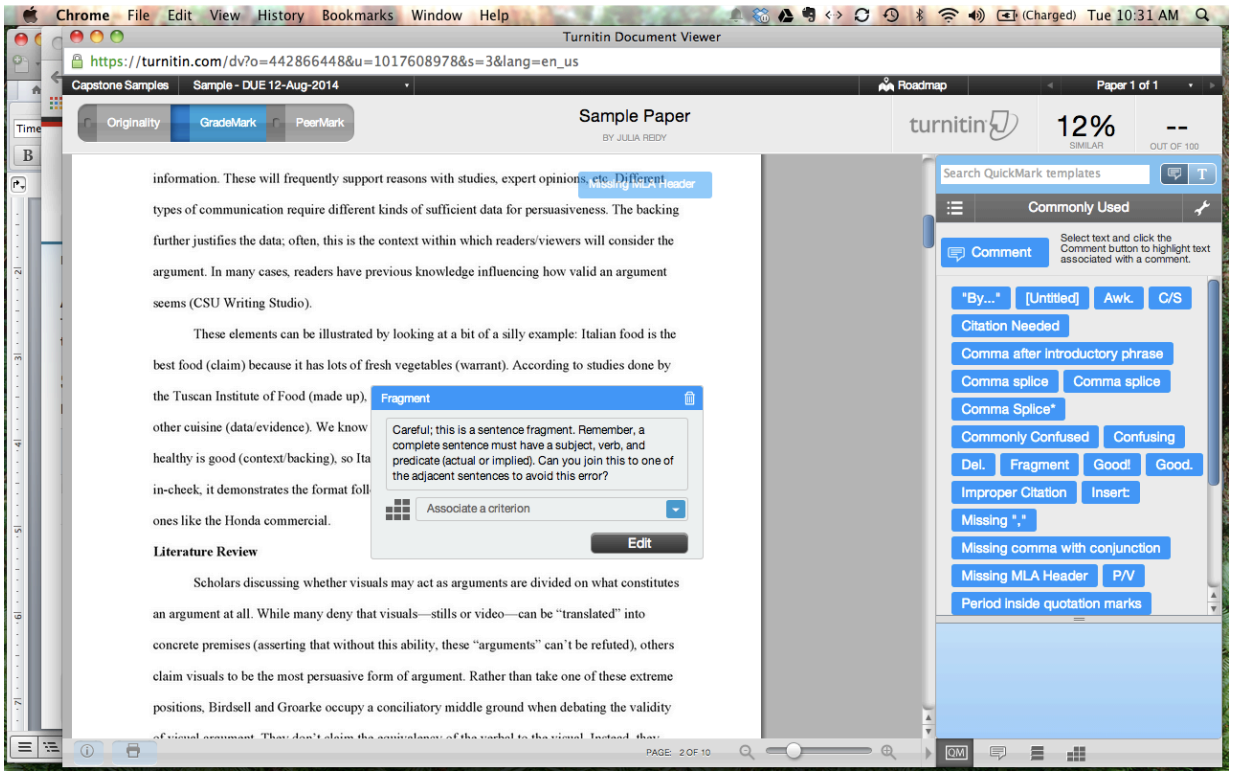

Fig. 5. Instructor view of feedback in Turnitin’s GradeMark, with drag-and-drop “Commonly Used” comments to the right.

While having multiple sub-sites certainly supports the idea of helpfulness to all, one of the most polarizing features of Turnitin within the composition community is its facilitation of one-size-fits-all feedback. Instructors can use pre-loaded and individually created "quick marks,"

pre-set comments that can be dragged and dropped without adjustment into different students' papers (see fig. 5). Some teachers fear this kind of digital shorthand reinforces feedback practices a growing consensus now accept as ineffective for supporting revision. These marks largely comment upon grammar and formatting issues, and if used without sufficient personal feedback, can risk making students feel as if their work is not unique within the response process. Additionally, rubric information can be automatically transferred to end-comment boxes, providing mix-and-match rather than truly personal feedback to the student; again, these interface options may in some cases guide instructors toward outdated response methods (see fig. 6 below). Whereas the intent of GradeMark's quick marks is to make responding to student writing more efficient—and many argue that they achieve this goal—if not used in balance with individualized comments, these software-based "suggestions" can reinforce instructors' practice of leaving the kinds of punitive, non-constructive feedback students expect and fear, those many teachers want to continue to avoid (Sommers, "Responding to Student Writing" 353).

Even the availability of different devices on which to use Turnitin reinforces the idea that this is a tool for teachers, not students. Turnitin offers an iPad app for instructors, but it doesn't offer one to students. In contrast, Microsoft Word offers versions for PC, Mac, and tablet use (both PC tablets and iPads), in which the commenting and "track changes" features are available to all users who have bought and paid for the software. It should be noted, however, that using Word on some mobile devices requires a monthly subscription, which also may serve to exclude some users.

Whatever device students use, the areas of Turnitin students where will spend the most time on are the two pages through which they receive teacher feedback: the originality report (plagiarism checker) and GradeMark (where teachers leave in-text, rubric, and end comments).

These are therefore the places visual communication will have the most impact. In KSU's Turnitin integration with D2L, instructors must enable plagiarism detection in order to use GradeMark as a feedback tool, so students will always receive an Originality Report when they receive GradeMark comments from their teachers. Students access their Originality Reports through a red button at the upper-right corner of the screen within GradeMark or from the icon with their "percent match" displayed in the D2L dropbox for their assignment. Low match numbers (below 20 percent) appear in blue, 20-30 percent matches appear in green, 30-40 percent shows up yellow, and the icon changes from yellow to red as the percent of the document matching web content passes 50 percent. These are reminiscent of traffic lights, warnings as the student approaches "dangerous" territory.

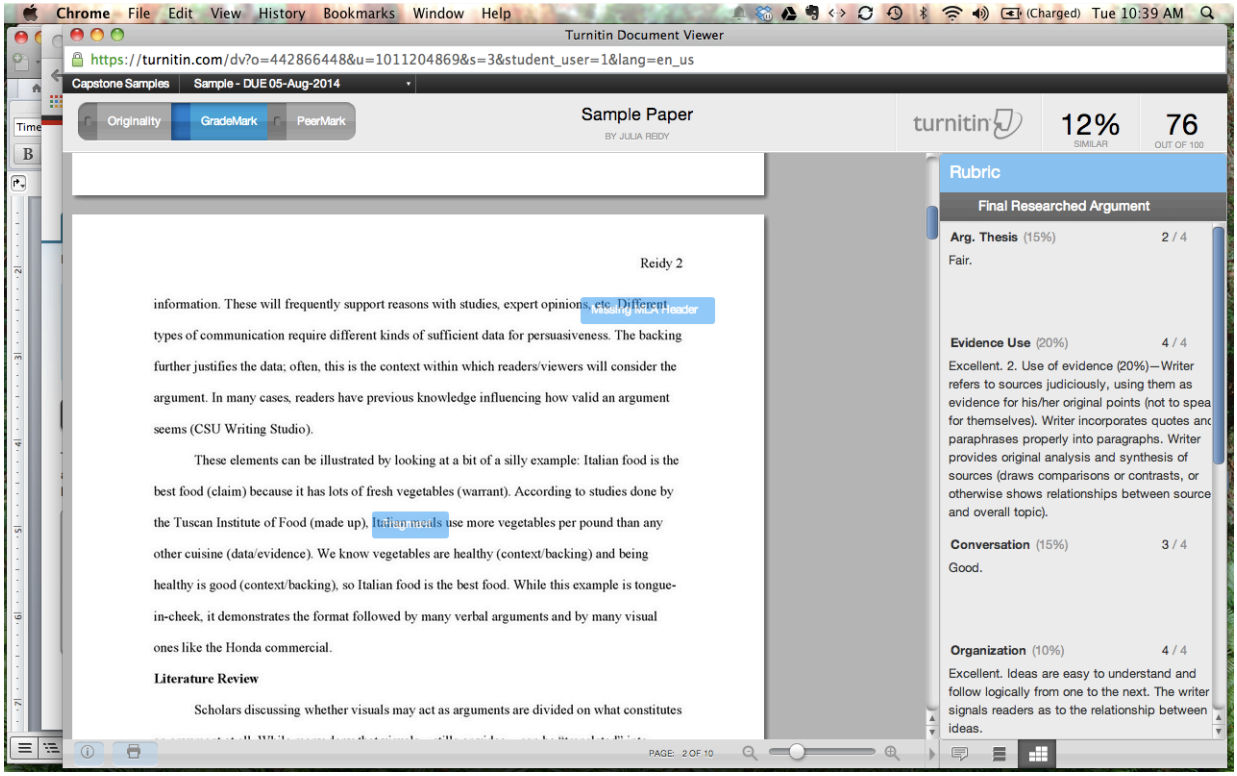

Fig. 6. Student view of drag-and-drop reusable comments seen on the text in Turnitin's GradeMark, as well as rubric information displayed to the right.

Within the Originality feature, any matches with other student essays submitted to the Turnitin database as well as those with web material (either current or archived) are highlighted

in the student paper. The page is framed in red, perhaps suggesting anger or wrongness. Vie argues that this color scheme “hearkens to militaristic metaphors; indeed, issues of academic integrity are often likened to a battlefield pitting instructors against students, each side incessantly gathering new ammunition to aid in the fight" (10-11). When they begin the feedback process, some students may already expect that teacher commentary will amount to an attack; this kind of messaging risks reinforcing such impressions.

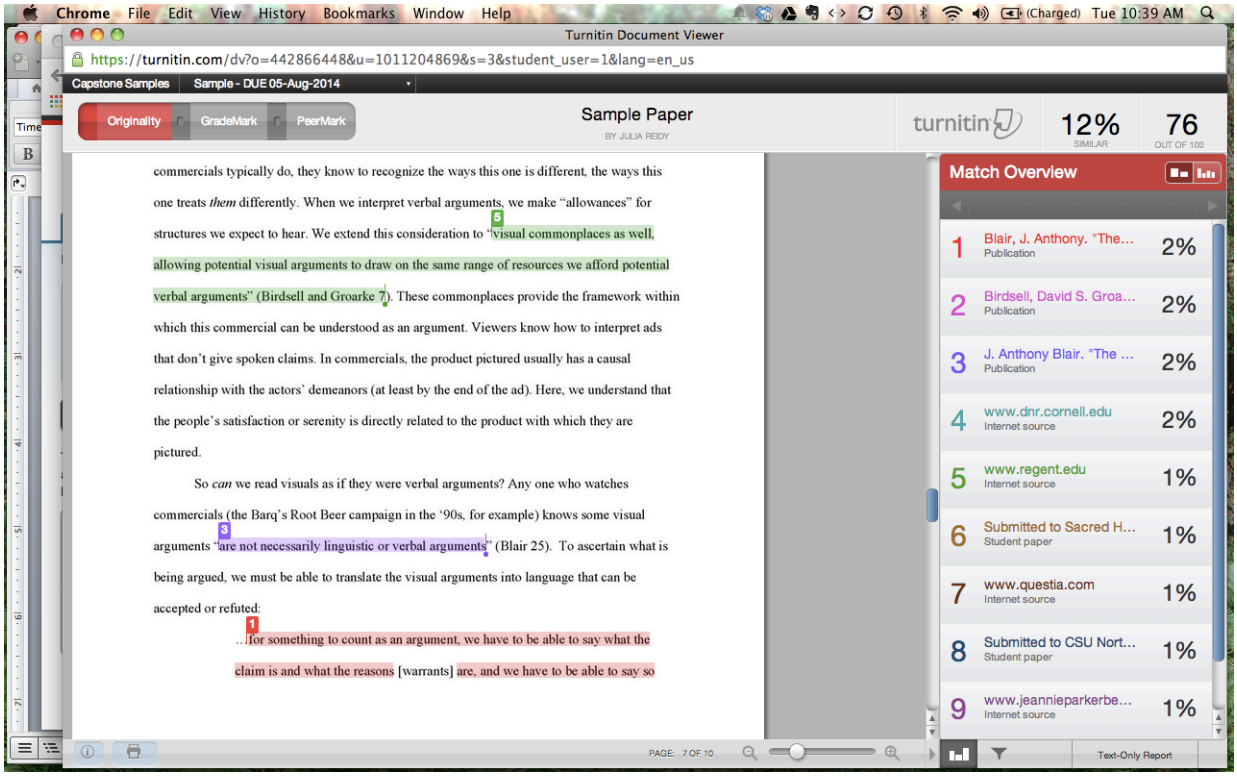

Fig. 7. An originality report in Turnitin with matches from sources highlighted in corresponding colors. The view is the same for students and instructors.

The match highlights are displayed in different colors, one for each source, and without a proper lesson a student will (and my students have) interpreted any match as indicating plagiarism (see fig. 7). Each highlight is given a number corresponding to the web or student paper source in the red “Match Overview” column to the right. Whereas in other platforms (including printed feedback) this is where the teacher comments will go, here the right margin is filled with potential plagiarism. The highlighting scheme within the student text may also carry

argumentative weight because the visual commonplace to which students are accustomed says anything highlighted or specially pointed out within their texts must be wrong. Instead, in the Originality Report, a match is just a match—if used with correct quotation marks and citations or around subject-specific terminology, the highlights may not indicate that anything is out of order.

At the top of the page, the total "percent match" is displayed for students to see—my students often assume that a high percentage automatically indicates that they have plagiarized. I have heard from some of my students that past instructors of theirs would give limits on the percent match that was acceptable, implying to students that only the percent "originality"—rather than the ways source material was used—is important in avoiding plagiarism. The lack of instruction within the regular user interface about what the numbers mean or what highlighted material indicates may lead to some students feeling attacked by these reports. The confusion further reinforces the power differential (and punitive nature of writing feedback) students are used to between themselves and their teachers, whom they expect to act as behavior police rather than instructors (DePew and Lettner-Rust 178; Vie 7). Here, the visual commonplaces both of responding to student writing and of the online environment work together to communicate a negative message. However, a significant mediating feature of the Originality Report page is that the view of it is the same for both instructors and students, if the instructor enables students to view it. When accompanied by classroom instruction on how to interpret reports, this equal access may encourage students to use it as a formative tool and to understand what instructors will see.

On the other hand, the colors and other presentation choices on the GradeMark page, where students receive teacher feedback, seem much "kinder." The light blue of the comment bubbles instructors place within student writing—which they either drag over from the "Quick

Mark" bar, click to place on top of student text, or associate with highlighted portions of text—may very likely have been deliberately chosen because of our societal impressions of the color as "calming," or "gentle." In a study of college students, Naz Kaya and Helen H. Epps found their respondents' reactions to blue to be associated with "feelings of relaxation and calmness, followed by happiness, comfort, peace, and hope" (Kaya and Epps). Certainly, this helps to support a more welcoming view of feedback than the red of the Originality Report.

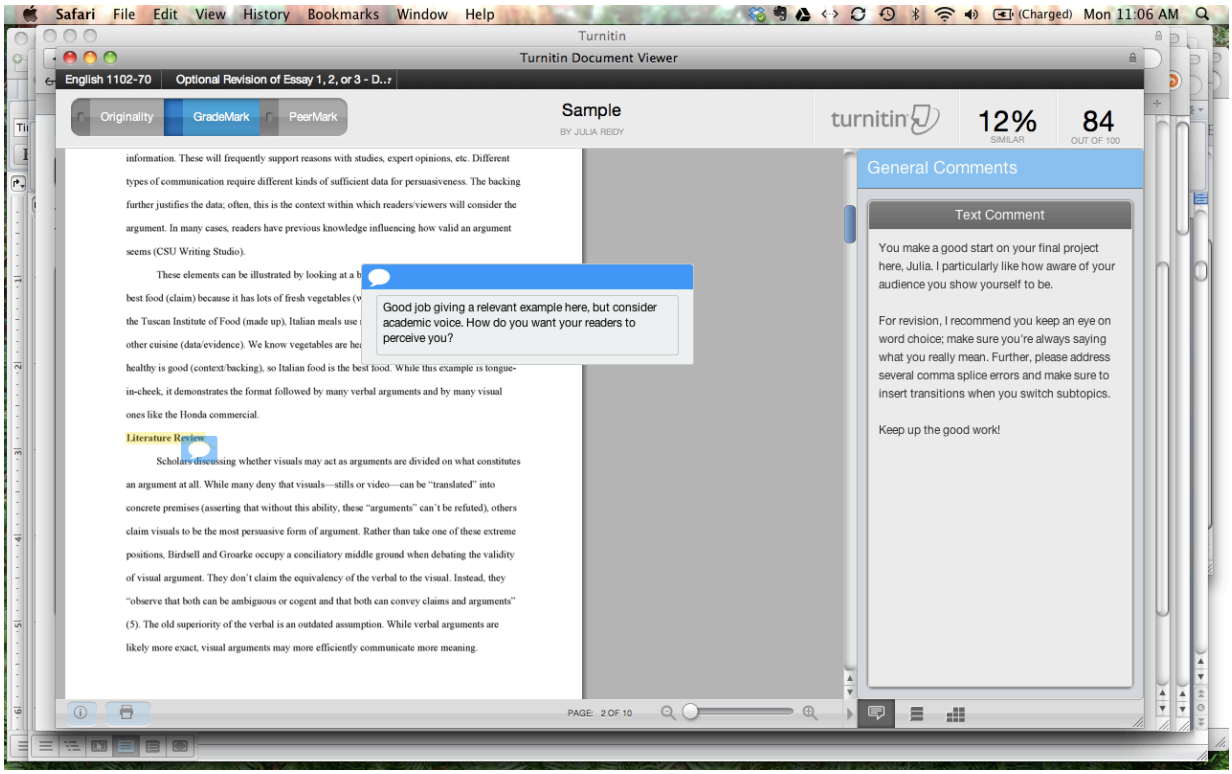

Fig. 8. Student view of feedback left in Turnitin's GradeMark with summative comment off to the right, as well as score and percent similarity from originality report displayed at the top.

To the right of their texts, students also immediately see a box where their instructor has written a longer summative comment about the essay (see fig. 8). This appears as black text on an off-white background, as does the rubric feedback students can access by pressing a button at the bottom of the page. The colors on the GradeMark page are relatively muted; again, in this setting it will be the content of the comments, not their presentation, that will be most likely to argue anything to students. Instructors using GradeMark remain in control of their feedback

practices as long as they resist letting "offers" made by the interface limit the depth of their responses.

Instead of communicating an argumentative message itself, by reinforcing expected forms in teacher grading and feedback, the GradeMark page may as a rhetorical exordium that prepares students for the arguments they typically look for in paper grading—corrections rather than responses. As a vessel through which instructors deliver their comments, GradeMark's rhetorical role is either to act as welcoming and encouraging or as intimidating and discouraging. A feature of GradeMark possibly significant to this distinction is that whether instructors choose to drag Quick Marks over to the text, to highlight and comment on particular sections, or to click to create a comment bubble, this bubble appears as translucent on top of the original student document itself. Students must hover over the bubble to get it to expand and reveal the content within. This interactivity required by the interface may carry different consequences depending on student habits of use; some students will hover over every comment and perhaps use the fact that they've dealt in almost a tactile way with their instructors' feedback as a route toward more in-depth revision and comprehension of feedback. Others may balk at the extra steps required to access every comment, and may only view some feedback. This interface, as exordium, is only effective if the student chooses to buy into the way it asks to be used. When the student removes her mouse from the comment, the instructor text disappears again, and it reduces back to the translucent blue bubble.

Even in their similarity, the two platforms I concentrate on in this project are not the same; their origins determine their efficacy as exordium. One platform was designed to be for graded educational feedback, and the other was not; however, both have communicative capabilities that are subject to instructor and student use of them. While they have different

characteristics, they both risk falling back on traditional commenting problems like over-response and correction rather than support. Teachers looking for more efficient ways of leaving feedback will have to consult their own feedback content habits rather than technology alone to affect the time spent responding to student writing. Neither e-feedback platform on its own supports a particular feedback philosophy; neither by itself can encourage constructive, reciprocal outcomes from writing response. This chapter's close look at the features of Microsoft Word comments and Turnitin GradeMark feedback helped me develop my survey questions and to contextualize the results I received from students and instructors. In some instances, respondents reacted to the rhetorical implications of the platforms I have described here; in others, they offered responses unpacking additional rhetorical content. In the next chapter, I detail my survey methods and discuss how I chose to investigate student and instructor reactions to e-feedback.

Chapter 3

Survey Methods

To investigate whether instructors' considerations when they adopt e-feedback practices agree with student preferences for receiving feedback, I needed to gather information from both sides of the transaction. It wasn't enough to simply ask instructors what they like to do; this was the information I felt I already had from speaking with my teachers and colleagues. Instead, I wanted to hear about decision-making criteria, what instructors *value* when selecting a feedback method. These results would complement the results of surveys I distributed to students who receive instructor feedback; by asking students about their preferences, I hoped to gather the information I needed to draw conclusions about whether student and instructor e-feedback values resemble each other. I used my analysis of two popular e-feedback platforms to inspire the questions I was asking, and to contextualize the responses I was receiving from both instructors and students. By comparing instructor and student survey results, I aimed to help instructors rethink their priorities when they decide how to distribute their comments on student writing. In other words, it's not a given that student and instructor goals will match, but it is possible for instructors to be better informed about student preferences and challenges when considering their own feedback priorities. I hoped to provide information to instructors both about what students say they prefer and about what fellow instructors consider best practices.

Student Web Survey

First, I surveyed a convenience sample of current first-year composition students at Kennesaw State University about their experiences when receiving instructor feedback on their essays in college. Via email, I approached English 1102 instructors during the summer 2014 semester about surveying their students. Four instructors allowed me to visit multiple sections of

their classes for about fifteen minutes each. In these English 1102 sections (which typically have twenty-six students, but which in the summer are frequently smaller), I asked students to complete web surveys designed on Qualtrics survey software in class because these are lab classrooms with enough computers for all students. I knew response rates would be higher if students could complete the surveys in class, as I have myself often deleted or postponed indefinitely my response to emailed surveys (MacNealy 150). I also wanted to be present to fully explain the consent process and to be able to clarify instructions in case students had questions about using the survey software. I distributed the survey link to students in class via their instructors and the D2L course management system.

English 1102 at Kennesaw State University is the second of two composition courses in the general education English sequence required of all students in any major. Whereas English 1101 concentrates on argument and rhetorical analysis, English 1102 focuses on research writing ("Guidelines for English 1102: Composition II"). Both classes require students to write at least four academic papers, so students receive ample feedback from instructors throughout the semester. Many students who exempt English 1101 because of Advanced Placement or joint enrollment credit will still take English 1102 at Kennesaw. I chose to survey students in this lower-level general education course, rather than those enrolled in upper-level English, because general education classes are more likely to have a representative sampling of the student population in terms of academic concentration. In this research, I value diversity of educational intent, since my goal is to make the study results as useful as possible to instructors like me who are teaching composition courses filled with students of different majors. Additionally, most students will have taken English 1101 recently (likely within the last year) when they enroll in 1102, so any feedback students may have received on their writing will be fresher in their

memories. I did not survey English 1101 sections because I decided these students would likely not yet have had feedback experiences I'm interested in so early in the summer semester.

It was also important to me that I survey a group of students I had myself never instructed, as I wanted to be sure to avoid any conflict of interest or unintended coercion to participate in the survey. I didn't want to run the risk of my students, whom I knew quite well by the end of spring semester, feeling an obligation to participate or skewing their responses in a direction they might imagine I'd prefer. I further decided to leave off any questions that inquired about students' identities (age, advancement in school, and so on) to ensure as full anonymity as possible and to encourage greater participation (MacNealy 153). KSU's Institutional Review Board verified the ethical construction of my survey project.

In my class visits to other instructors' sections of English 1102, I introduced myself and spoke briefly to the students about the topic of the study survey and the consent process, then directed them to the Qualtrics link. I made it clear that they could opt out of the survey at any time without penalty and that their identities would not be recorded, hoping— beyond consideration of ethical concerns—that this guaranteed anonymity would prompt students to provide as honest and productive results as possible. After the students completed the IRB consent page, they proceeded to the web survey, which consisted of ten question groups and combined multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions aiming to paint as complete a picture of each respondent's opinion of e-feedback as possible.

I first asked students a multiple choice question about the ways teachers have returned feedback to them digitally and on paper. Students were asked to select all that applied from a five-choice list (see fig. 9 below). This question was meant to gauge students' familiarity with the e-feedback platforms I was investigating, as familiarity with the platform—or at least that the

platform sufficiently follows familiar conventions—could be a main factor in student and instructor preference (Blair-Early and Zender 100). I next asked students to rank these platforms from most preferred to least preferred, and then, with an open-ended question, to justify their responses. I asked for long-answer elaboration on this and several other topics, so that respondents could "give reasons, or tell a story as an illustration, or even comment on the wording of the question" (MacNealy 164). I would not have been able to anticipate all of this information, so other question types would not have produced such rich results (MacNealy 153).

2. (Please select all that apply.) In a college class, an instructor has returned comments to me on a piece of my writing by using:
Turnitin's GradeMark (either by itself or through D2L)
Microsoft Word comments (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" features)
A PDF of comments inserted into my original file.
A printed copy (hard copy) of my writing with handwritten or typed comments added.
Feedback in D2L dropbox (instead of comments within the document itself)

Fig. 9. Student survey question 2.

Question 3 asked students about their general comfort levels with online technologies and with uploading and downloading files from the web. I asked this question of both student and instructor respondents to attempt to understand whether those users with greater comfort and familiarity with web technologies would have vastly different opinions on e-feedback from their less-web-inclined counterparts. I'll discuss this question further in Chapter 4.

The next question group investigated students' overall attitudes about ease of accessing instructor comments on their writing using different technologies. The first question, "I am more likely to follow teacher suggestions on my writing if they are given to me through a method I prefer (printed copy, digital file, etc.)," investigated how specifically these attitudes about access might affect the likelihood students would revise their writing based on instructor feedback. I asked for responses to these statements along a Likert scale: "strongly agree," "agree, "neither agree nor disagree, "disagree," or "strongly disagree" (see fig. 10 below). With these questions, I

was looking for what was at stake when students receive feedback digitally from instructors. For these students, had digital response been easy or difficult to deal with? Did it work the way it was supposed to? Was it easier or more difficult to access than traditional handwritten responses? And how much does response method influence students' willingness to engage in the revision process via their instructors' comments?

I am more likely to follow teacher suggestions on my writing if they are given to me through a method I prefer (printed copy, digital file, etc.).
I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in a Microsoft Word file in the past.
I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in Turnitin's GradeMark in the past.
I have had trouble reading or otherwise using teacher comments on a printed copy of my writing in the past.
When I receive feedback on a piece of my writing from a teacher, I always read the comments.
The format in which teachers send me my comments determines whether I will read them.

Fig. 10. Statements in student survey question 6.

Next, in an open-ended question, I asked what other feedback methods students had used in order to double check whether this study was investigating the most relevant e-feedback technology. Then, another open-ended question inquired after whether respondents were aware of any ethical debates about using Turnitin for student work, and if so, whether they had concerns about that (see Appendix A). This latter question, though it may seem tangential to the rest of the study, was important to include because of how much discussion and literature within the composition field currently addresses plagiarism checkers in writing classes. That is, the ethical concerns surrounding sites like Turnitin certainly seem to be important to instructors; I wanted to know whether they were important to students, too.

Finally, to illuminate what the e-feedback platforms I was investigating looked like visually for those who may not have previously used them, and to inquire whether visual appearance factored into students' opinions, I asked students to look at two screen captures of the same essay with the same comments, the first in Microsoft Word and the second in Turnitin's

GradeMark (see figs. 11 and 12).

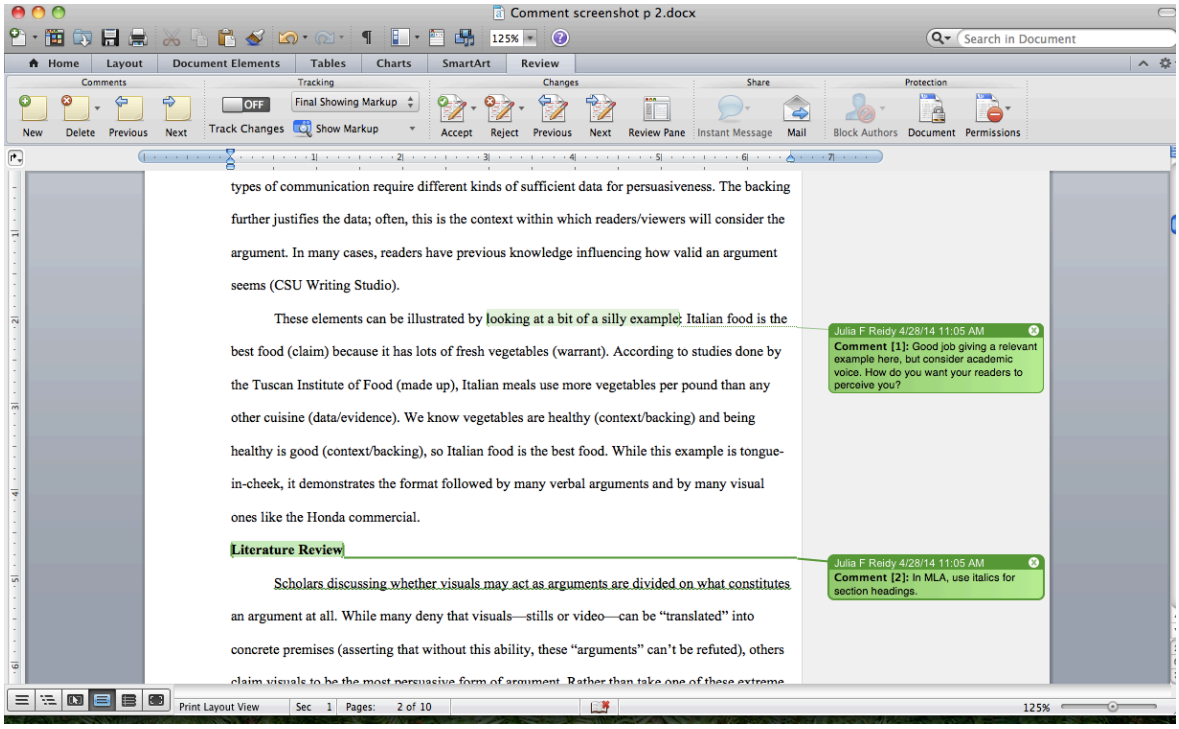

Fig. 11. Screen capture of an essay with comments in Microsoft Word.

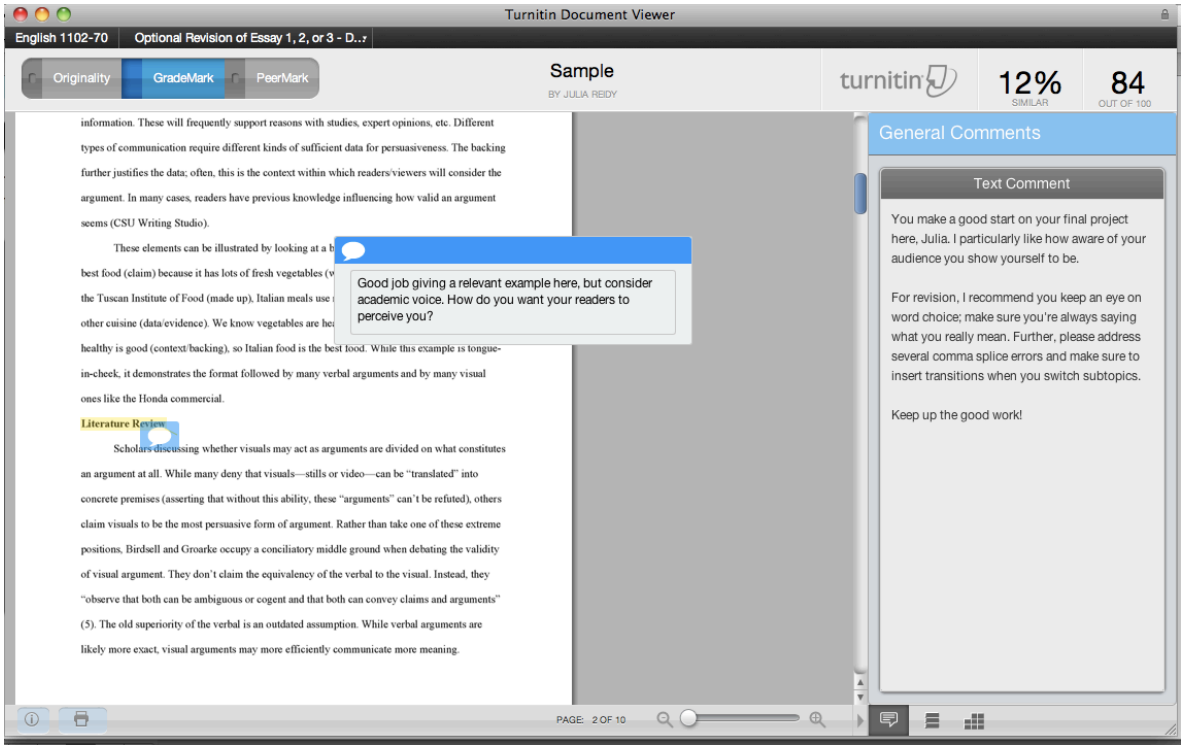

Fig. 12. Screen capture of an essay with comments in Turnitin's GradeMark.

I then asked students to respond along the same Likert scale to three statements (see fig. 13). I hoped students would react to the visual features of the e-feedback platforms, and that they would be able to point out particular aspects of the technology interface that they preferred and did not prefer. After this, I again asked them to justify their responses, providing me with opportunity to code what they had written using discourse analysis in order to uncover their priorities. I wanted to draw conclusions based on the descriptors that appeared most often. These results would prove most helpful when comparing student responses to instructor responses.

I would rather receive comments from my teacher like the ones in the first screen capture than the second.
The screen captures "feel" exactly the same to me.
In a revision, I would be more likely to follow the advice in the first screen capture than the second.

Fig. 13. Statements presented to students for response along a Likert scale in student survey question 9.

Instructor Web Survey

I also sent a Web survey to all KSU English instructors via the English and Part-time English listservs during summer semester 2014, and again in fall semester 2014, so that I could compare teachers' decision criteria with what students value in e-feedback. The English listserv reaches all full-time English faculty at Kennesaw, and the Part-time English listserv reaches all part-time faculty and teaching assistants. I hoped to get responses from both groups, given that I value the opinions of both kinds of instructors equally; any instructor who regularly gave feedback to students on their writing was eligible. I also hoped that since I was first requesting participation during the summer, I might have a higher response rate due to the contrast with the flood of listserv activity during fall and spring semesters. In both instances, I sent the Qualtrics instructor survey link out within an email providing a brief explanation of my research and requesting voluntary participation. I did not anticipate particularly high participation rates, especially since I sent the surveys out at the busy beginning of each semester, but I hoped to

receive 10-20 instructor responses.

In the instructor surveys, I concentrated on the extent to which instructors' impressions of the convenience of different feedback platforms influence their selection of e-feedback methods. Do instructors just pick a platform that is easiest to use? Do they simply go along with the options provided by the content management system at their university? Or are they conscious of rhetorical implications embedded within the means by which they return feedback to students? What plays the biggest role in their decisions?

I looked for these answers by asking instructors similar questions to the ones I asked students. After asking one demographic question (discussed further in the "Weakness and Strengths" section below), I asked what response methods these teachers had used in their careers as English or composition instructors in order to gauge familiarity, as with the similar student survey question (see fig. 14). I thought it was a reasonable risk that respondents might rank least preferred the platforms they themselves had never used. I didn't want to mistake simple unfamiliarity for aversion. Or, rather, I wanted to make sure the preferences instructors expressed were true preferences, so I next asked instructors to rank these platforms from most preferred to least preferred, and, in an open-ended question, to justify their preferences. Here, instructors would begin to reveal what they value in feedback technology.

2. In a college class you've taught, please select all of the methods you've used to return your comments to students on their writing.
Turnitin's GradeMark
Microsoft Word file (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" feature)
PDF
Handwritten or typed comments on a printed copy of the student's writing
Feedback in a course management system like D2L's dropbox (instead of comments within the file itself)

Fig. 14. Instructor survey question 2.

Next, instead of including screen captures in the instructor survey as I had in the student one, I instead asked instructors to self-report the order of their priorities when they select a

response method. I left out the screenshots because I (perhaps prematurely) assumed most instructors would be familiar with the platforms and that their decision-making criteria about e-feedback would lie elsewhere than in display features and physical appeal. Including screen captures would, I imagined, be redundant. Instead, I hoped to illuminate with this question whether what instructors reported to be their priorities would match what they wrote in the previous justification for their response platform rankings. I wanted to double-check that respondents were giving honest information, or rather, that the questions I was asking revealed their true opinions. Instructors were to drag-and-drop these priorities into order from most important to least important (see fig. 15). I asked instructors to answer an open-ended question where they justified these rankings, as well, to further ascertain their priorities. This elaboration would hopefully uncover whether what instructors value in feedback is any different than what they think they value; I speculated that many respondents might want to answer that they put student needs above their own convenience, for example, but was that really the order of their priorities when it came down to real decision making about e-feedback? I hoped to eventually compare these results with student preferences, uncovering where instructor and student e-feedback preferences and needs do and do not overlap.

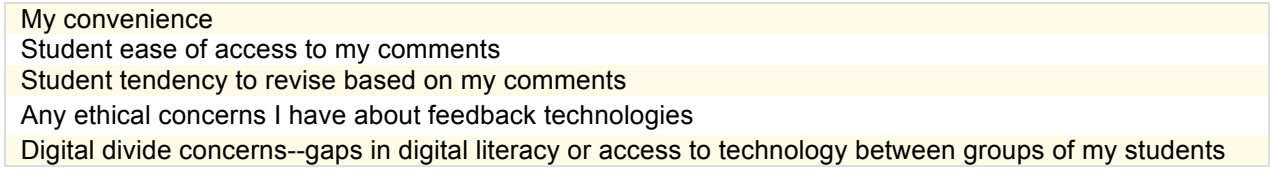

Fig. 15. Criteria choices in instructor survey question 6.

Next, I asked what commenting methods instructors were currently using, as I wanted to allow for the possibility that some instructors might have opinions about best practices they were not able to currently implement. I asked what the instructors thought of the method they currently used. I asked, in the next open-ended question, if there were other feedback platforms

instructors used that I had not mentioned in the survey, again to ascertain whether I was investigating the most relevant technologies to current college writing feedback.

Finally, I asked this open-ended question: “Are the comments you leave on student writing typically on drafts in-process or on final versions of essays? Do you prefer different means of commenting for different situations?” I wanted to end the survey with a question of similar purpose to the questions on the student survey asking about whether students read instructor comments on their writing and whether feedback platform matters to the usefulness of that commentary: I wanted to know what was at stake in this feedback. I hoped by asking this question to receive some responses having to do with how feedback preference connects to overall teaching philosophy and methodology.

These surveys were inspired and contextualized by the analyses I had done of the platforms themselves. The options offered by software have a generative effect on the ways both students and instructors use them; that is, if particular features are foregrounded during the user experience, those features (plagiarism detection, end commenting, etc.) become the first consideration when instructors leave feedback, as well as when students view these artifacts. We run the risk of certain needs, certain voices, becoming “restricted or silenced or reduced in complexity by what we produce" (Wysocki and Jasken 45). Differing levels of interactivity also carry rhetorical weight, perhaps being used and interpreted differently by both instructors and students with different levels of comfort (digital literacy) with such technologies. Since I had unpacked what had been buried within the user experiences of both Microsoft Word and Turnitin’s GradeMark considering both an instructor and a student user perspective, much as Stephanie Vie advocates her students do with Turnitin, I had in mind some of what I interpreted as the rhetorical implications embedded in each (see Chapter 2). These surveys were to act as the

data that could confirm or refute my interpretation of the e-feedback platforms; in other words, is it possible to see the parts of interfaces from which students interpret argument? What do these technological interfaces themselves have to do with student preference and the meaning they draw from instructor feedback? In the next chapter, I discuss the results of these surveys and how they may be interpreted.

Chapter 4

Instructor and Student Survey Results

In order for this study to positively impact instructor decisions about how and where to leave feedback for students on their writing, it is necessary to look at the ways the student and instructor survey results align—or don't—with each other. In many of the activities of the classroom, students' desires and intentions differ from instructors'. The responses of the surveyed students and instructors in this study help shed some light on their respective opinions of and needs from e-feedback.

3. Please select one response for each line below.

#	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Mean
1	I consider myself comfortable using online technologies.	46	20	4	2	0	72	1.47
2	I consider myself comfortable with downloading and using documents from the Web.	48	19	1	1	1	70	1.40

Fig. 16. Student responses to Question 3.

3. Please select one response for each line below.

#	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Mean
1	I consider myself comfortable using online technologies.	10	8	0	0	0	18	1.44
2	I consider myself comfortable with downloading and using documents from the Web.	12	6	0	0	0	18	1.33

Fig. 17. Instructor responses to Question 3.

Comfort with Technology

At the beginning of both the surveys, I asked students and instructors about their comfort with technology (see figs. 16 and 17). In both groups, many more respondents strongly agreed or

agreed that technology was comfortable for them; however, all eighteen of the instructors answered either "agree" or "strongly agree," while six student respondents out of seventy-two selected "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." These results are significant firstly because they counter some assumptions I previously held about students being almost universally comfortable with new technologies, especially as many traditional-aged freshmen are considered "digital natives." Next, as I'll discuss below, the answers students and instructors gave to this question did not allow me to make predictions about their self-reported opinions about e-feedback in the ways I might have expected; comfort with technology, it turns out, doesn't necessarily give rise to overall preference for it.

Student Web Survey Results

From visiting five sections of English 1102 at Kennesaw State University, I received seventy-seven student responses, seventy-one of which were fully completed. With these surveys, I was able to collect data on several topics: what e-feedback technologies students are comfortable using in the classroom, what students value when receiving instructor feedback on their writing, and what attributes of e-feedback platforms themselves contribute to their perceived value for students.

The survey's initial question, which asked respondents in what ways they had received instructor feedback in the past, spoke to the former concern (see fig. 18 below). Students had most often gotten teacher comments on their writing either printed on paper copies of their essays or in Desire2Learn (D2L), KSU's course management system. Almost as many students had used Microsoft Word comments, and much smaller numbers had used Turnitin's GradeMark or PDFs. Two things surprise me about these results: first, out of the seventy-one respondents answering the question, not all of them had received teacher comments on printed copies of their

papers. This was the paradigm for many years; perhaps it is beginning to change. Next, I was interested to see that so many students (fifty-one) listed that they had received feedback within D2L rather than on the text of the paper itself; I wonder if these responses were on shorter pieces of writing rather than longer essays—in my own classes, this is how I use the course management system dropbox comments field, which is not embedded within the document itself—and I regret that I did not make this distinction in the wording of my question.

2. (Please select all that apply.) In a college class, an instructor has returned comments to me on a piece of my writing by using:

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Turnitin's GradeMark (either by itself or through D2L)	22	31%
2	Microsoft Word comments (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" features)	47	66%
3	A PDF of comments inserted into my original file.	14	20%
4	A printed copy (hard copy) of my writing with handwritten or typed comments added.	53	75%
5	Feedback in D2L dropbox (instead of comments within the document itself)	51	72%

Fig. 18. Student survey question 2.

4. Please rank your most preferred way of receiving teacher comments on a piece of your writing. (1 is most preferred method. 5 is least preferred method.) Simply drag the bars into the right order (it will assign the top choice #1, the second #2, and so on).

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
1	Printed copy (either handwritten or typed comments)	44	11	3	10	2	70
2	Microsoft Word document	16	36	14	3	1	70
3	PDF	1	7	20	34	8	70
4	Turnitin's GradeMark	0	4	6	9	51	70
5	Feedback in D2L dropbox (instead of comments within the document itself)	9	12	27	14	8	70
	Total	70	70	70	70	70	-

Fig. 19. Student survey question group 4.

Question 4 then began to address student preference (see fig. 19). A large number of respondents, 63 percent, ranked “printed copy” first, despite my assumptions that students might prefer digital responses. An even larger number of students, 73 percent, selected Turnitin’s

GradeMark as their least favorite way to receive instructor feedback; however, considering the results of Question 2—that only 31 percent of respondents had ever used GradeMark—it might be reasonable to conclude that many students listing GradeMark as their last choice were simply unfamiliar with it.

Factors such as these were why I thought it essential to ask students to justify their rankings in an open-ended question. Through coding these responses, I was able to uncover some of what students value in the feedback they receive from instructors on their writing. Twenty-four of the sixty-six students who answered the question (36 percent) responded with some form of preference for the tactile, portable, or visual nature of printed copies of essays with comments written on them, though eight respondents (12 percent) acknowledged that illegible teacher handwriting is a problem. Nineteen respondents (29 percent) chose their rankings because they wanted instructor comments to be easily correlated with the parts of the essays to which they apply. Fourteen respondents (21 percent) expressed opinion dealing with file access; that is, having separate logins for sites like Turnitin is inconvenient, whereas having files available within course management websites students must already access is convenient. Ten students (15 percent) noted that printing is less desirable because it wastes paper or "kills trees," another ten made their rankings based on what software they were already familiar with, and seven more (11 percent) made value judgments based on the authenticity or personal nature of written versus digital comments. This last group seemed to think that handwritten comments meant instructors had "put more work into examining what [students] said and paid… more attention." This group of students has intuited Loel Kim's assertion that modality affects content, but they have also made assumptions about instructors' allowing their feedback to be led by the interface, a conclusion which this study investigates (309).

6. Please select one response for each line below.								
#	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Mean
1	I am more likely to follow teacher suggestions on my writing if they are given to me through a method I prefer (printed copy, digital file, etc.).	36	17	13	4	1	71	1.83
2	I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in a Microsoft Word file in the past.	0	7	21	32	10	70	3.64
3	I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in Turnitin's GradeMark in the past.	1	11	45	10	4	71	3.07
4	I have had trouble reading or otherwise using teacher comments on a printed copy of my writing in the past.	4	14	11	26	16	71	3.51
5	When I receive feedback on a piece of my writing from a teacher, I always read the comments.	50	14	5	1	1	71	1.44
6	The format in which teachers send me my comments determines whether I will read them.	7	13	15	18	18	71	3.38

Fig. 20. Student survey question group 6.

Next, students responded to a question group about how they use feedback and what trouble they have or have not encountered when using specific feedback technologies (see fig. 20). The most compelling number is the thirty-six respondents (51 percent) who answered "strongly agree" to this statement: "I am more likely to follow teacher suggestions on my writing if they are given to me through a method I prefer (printed copy, digital file, etc.)." Fifty out of the seventy-one respondents (70 percent) strongly agreed that they always read the feedback they

receive on their writing from teachers; students *are* reading instructor feedback, but *where* that feedback arrives may have significance beyond whether it gets read.

These results also reveal that file conversion or other e-feedback malfunctions do not account for a significant portion of students' platform preferences; very few respondents answered "agree" or "strongly agree," and most actually selected "neither agree nor disagree" or "disagree" when asked whether they'd had difficulty accessing comments within MS Word or Turnitin's GradeMark. These low numbers should suggest that instructors move issues with conversion or accessibility a bit farther down the list of priorities when considering what criteria to use to select feedback methods. It should be noted, though, that respondents without experience with Turnitin may have answered "disagree" to this statement, possibly skewing results. Additionally, just eighteen (fourteen agreed and four strongly agreed) of the seventy-one respondents (25 percent) had trouble with legibility on printed feedback, an issue instructors acknowledge often to justify their decisions to use e-feedback instead of handwritten feedback.

Finally, and perhaps contradictorily, most students reported that they would use comments more if they were delivered through a preferred method, but no significant majority fell on either side of the Likert scale for the statement: "The format in which teachers send me my comments determines whether I will read them." So, students almost certainly read instructor commentary no matter what, but the *usability* of that commentary—incidence of revision and other formative feedback uses—may depend more on the platform instructors use to deliver those comments.

When I next asked what other feedback methods students had previously used, only "verbal response" was offered by respondents; students in this sample group had not received feedback using other technologies. This result confirmed that among these particular student

respondents, I had investigated the relevant e-feedback technologies. Then, the next question inquired whether respondents were aware of any ethical debates about using Turnitin for student work, and if so, whether they had concerns. To this point, almost all answered that they had not heard about these concerns or had not heard of Turnitin at all. Therefore, ethical problems can be eliminated as a criterion for feedback platform preference in this group of students. However, this does not imply that instructors shouldn't be concerned; instead, this result should simply make us aware that this is an issue students in 1102 at Kennesaw were not yet acquainted with. Perhaps they should be. A few respondents did express skepticism about the way Turnitin identifies matches in its Originality Reports, and a couple more reported a desire to look into the issue further.

9. Consider the two screen captures you've just seen, and pick one answer for each line below.

#	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Mean
1	I would rather receive comments from my teacher like the ones in the first screen capture than the second.	39	11	13	6	2	71	1.89
2	The screen captures "feel" exactly the same to me.	12	10	13	29	7	71	3.13
3	In a revision, I would be more likely to follow the advice in the first screen capture than the second.	26	18	13	8	6	71	2.30

Fig. 21. Student survey question group 9.

In the final questions, students responded along a Likert scale to the two screen captures of the same essay being responded to (with the same comments) in Microsoft Word and in Turnitin's Grademark (see figs. 11 and 12). They then responded to three statements about their impressions of these images of the platforms (see fig. 21). Student responses here heavily

favored MS Word comments over GradeMark comments. I attempted to confirm student responses by asking question 9.2 (see fig. 21 above), "The screen captures 'feel' exactly the same to me," and thirty-six students disagreed or strongly disagreed. To them, there was a clear difference between the two. Further, forty-four students agreed or strongly agreed that they'd be more likely to "follow advice" given in MS Word than GradeMark, which for me would be enough to prompt adoption of Word as my chosen feedback platform.

The open-ended question that followed asked students to justify their responses to Question 9. This kind of question best uncovered students' priorities when it comes to feedback they receive because of certain categories of descriptive words. Clarity descriptors appeared six times, familiarity with the platform was important to seven respondents, and words like "distracting," "cluttered," "confusing," or "complicated" appeared eleven times. Further, students mentioned eleven times that they preferred the screen capture that was "easier to see" or "easier on the eye," reinforcing Robert J. Nathan and Paul H.P. Yeow's finding that visual appeal is one of the most valued factors in interface design (156). Whatever their reasons, fifty of the seventy-one student respondents (70 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that MS Word was their preferred e-feedback platform over GradeMark, though surprisingly, neither received the kind of preference printed, hard copy feedback had within the student sample group.

Instructor Web Survey Results

Even though I requested instructor participation on the English listservs during the hectic beginnings of the 2014 summer and fall semesters, I gratefully received twenty-six instructor responses, more than my desired ten-to-twenty-response sample size. Like the student survey, I began by investigating instructors' familiarity with particular feedback methods (see fig. 22 below). Here, many of the respondents had used printed feedback (92 percent), MS Word

comments (72 percent), and D2L dropbox feedback (64 percent), and far fewer had used GradeMark and PDF. The low number of respondents with experience using Turnitin's GradeMark again surprised me given its ubiquity in my experience as part of the KSU English department, further evidence that word-of-mouth or advice from colleagues cannot always accurately reflect the field or predict success.

2. In a college class you've taught, please select all of the methods you've used to return your comments to students on their writing.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Turnitin's GradeMark	8	32%
2	Microsoft Word file (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" feature)	18	72%
3	PDF	5	20%
4	Handwritten or typed comments on a printed copy of the student's writing	23	92%
5	Feedback in a course management system like D2L's dropbox (instead of comments within the file itself)	16	64%

Fig. 22. Instructor survey question 2.

4. Please rank the below methods of commenting on students' writing in order of preference (1 is most preferred; 6 is least preferred). Simply drag and drop choices into place. The choice at the top will be read as #1, the second as #2, and so on.

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Responses
1	Comments either handwritten or typed on printed copies of student work.	12	4	3	3	3	1	26
2	Microsoft Word notes	8	8	3	6	1	0	26
3	Turnitin's GradeMark (accessed by itself--not through a course management system like D2L)	2	2	2	8	8	4	26
4	Turnitin's GradeMark (accessed through a course management system like D2L)	0	6	2	4	9	5	26
5	PDF	0	4	6	2	3	11	26
6	Feedback in a course management system like D2L's dropbox (instead of comments within the file itself)	4	2	10	3	2	5	26
	Total	26	26	26	26	26	26	-

Fig. 23. Instructor survey question 4.

Instructors ranked their most preferred methods, and the results revealed much less consensus than appeared in the student responses, which might in part be due to the smaller sample size or to the fact that instructor respondents do not necessarily teach the same kinds of courses (see fig. 23). Twelve of the twenty-six respondents that answered this question (46

percent) ranked handwritten or typed comments on printed copies of student work in first place, the clearest majority, while sixteen of the twenty-six respondents (62 percent) ranked Microsoft Word comments number one or number two. Eleven of the twenty-six respondents (42 percent) ranked PDF comments last, and twenty of the twenty-six respondents (77 percent) ranked Turnitin's Grademark (accessed by itself—not through a course management system like D2L) in fourth, fifth, or sixth place. Again, many more respondents than I expected showed a clear preference for Microsoft Word over Turnitin's GradeMark.

Coding written responses to the following open-ended question, which asked for justification of respondents' choices in question 4, revealed categories of priorities for instructors; some of these categories were similar to students' priorities and some of them were different. For example, mention of descriptors having to do with speed, convenience, and simplicity appeared eleven times, accompanied by negatives having to do with programs being "clunky" or "cumbersome" four times. Teachers imagined that students preferred to access files via sites they already logged on to, and they mentioned this three times. Portability, internet access, and "screen fatigue" issues showed up four times.

One of the biggest areas of overlap between response groups was that both students and instructors surveyed heavily value feedback directly associated with specific areas of text (mentioned by 23 percent of instructor respondents). Both groups want it to be immediately clear to which parts of student essays particular instructor comments correspond. For example, the "speech bubble" placed on top of the text in Turnitin's GradeMark did not seem to fulfill this requirement as well as, in MS Word, highlighted portions of text with marginal comments linked directly to them by lines (see Ch. 2 figs. 1, 6, and 8). This distinction introduces a new "ease of use" category I didn't know to anticipate, one which seems to be held in high value by students

and instructors alike.

Like many students, some instructors also consider handwritten feedback more "individual" and "personal" (four mentions, 15 percent). Six specific mentions of students' ease of use and likeliness of revision appeared in instructor responses (26 percent), as did five specific mentions (26 percent) of the ethical drawbacks of Turnitin, which were largely ignored by students. Both students and instructors agreed that legibility of handwriting is a problem with hard copy feedback (four instructor mentions), though student responses to their question 6 above reveal that these readability concerns don't become problems that much of the time.

6. Please rank in order of importance the below criteria you use to pick a commenting method. (1 is most important; 5 is least important.) Simply drag and drop choices into place. The choice at the top will be read as #1, the second as #2, and so on.

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
1	My convenience	7	8	3	3	2	23
2	Student ease of access to my comments	12	7	3	1	0	23
3	Student tendency to revise based on my comments	4	4	12	2	1	23
4	Any ethical concerns I have about feedback technologies	0	3	1	12	7	23
5	Digital divide concerns--gaps in digital literacy or access to technology between groups of my students	0	1	4	5	13	23
	Total	23	23	23	23	23	-

Fig. 24. Instructor survey question 6.

Next, to find out whether instructors were accurately self-reporting what they value, I asked them to rank their criteria as they select feedback methods (see fig. 24). Twelve of the twenty-three respondents ranked "student ease of access to my comments" in first place, while another seven respondents ranked "my convenience" in first place, and a final four ranked "student tendency to revise based on my comments" in first place. No respondent ranked "ethical concerns" or "digital divide concerns" in first place; in fact, thirteen of the twenty-three respondents ranked this concern dead last. This confidence with students' ability to access feedback wherever it may be, no matter what their background or history with technology, seems to be supported by student responses to their survey question 6: They always read comments, no

matter how they're delivered, but they're more likely to revise when they've been delivered in a way students prefer. However, the fact that instructors did rank "student ease of access to my comments" high on the list of their priorities means perhaps that instructors value convenience—first their students', then their own—which is unsurprising given increasing workloads on both sides of this relationship.

The open-ended justification I asked for next did not lend itself to coded responses as the categories were pre-determined by the rankings in question 6. Instead, instructors fleshed out their priorities with opinions that uncovered instructor attitudes about student use of feedback. For example, one respondent wrote: "Students don't revise much anyway; I hold few illusions about that. Students need to get with the times. If they don't know how to use technology (and we're talking basic stuff here), then they need to learn." Another respondent wanted students to retain ownership of their writing when he or she wrote, "I want students to be the masters of their own writing projects…I use Word in a way that I hope helps them identify issues and consider alternatives for corrections and improvements." One instructor seemed to speak for many of his or her colleagues, writing, "I am more practically minded than theoretical. Ethical concerns matter to me, but not as much as my students' ease of access and my ability to progress through the piles of grading in a timely manner." Another objected to the wording of the question: "I'm not sure whether I'd call my main reason for preferring the method I use 'my convenience.' Maybe it is. But more important to me, it's the way I think I do the best job."

Some instructors introduced new criteria I hadn't considered when constructing the survey, such as keeping files in their original ecology (commenting in Word files for writing created in Word, for example). One instructor wrote this paragraph:

> …they have teachers teaching in overcrowded classrooms and teaching too many

> classes (or in my case, paying so little that I have to go several places to teach too many classes and let's throw in some commuting time as well). So being able to finish grading with the minimum of all-nighters is good. But what really threw me toward doing the dropbox comments, was that it wasn't just convenient for me—it seemed to get better attention from students and it kept both of us focused on higher order concerns, rather than on rearranging commas.

Even though I never asked about it directly, this teacher's opinion shows how workload influences instructor decisions about e-feedback. Many of these responses also reveal the ways instructors make adjustments as they go along based on classroom experiences; data may or may not matter when compared with what people *feel* works for them.

I next asked what feedback methods instructors currently used; only two listed Turnitin's GradeMark, eight listed MS Word comments, seven listed handwritten comments, and seven listed D2L feedback. These responses further confirmed the diverse results of question 4; that is, instructors' preferences differ greatly based on their individual habits. Then, I asked what other feedback platforms instructors were using that I had not included in the survey, and I found audio comments, Google Docs, email, and the D2L iPad app to be the most common responses. These results underscore how different e-feedback preferences are among instructors, even within a relatively small sample group in one department at one university. The two platforms I chose to investigate do not represent as clear an e-feedback consensus as I thought they might. Future research could explore these other feedback options in greater depth.

Finally, the last open-ended question—"Are the comments you leave on student writing typically on drafts in-process or on final versions of essays? Do you prefer different means of commenting for different situations?"—achieved quite mixed results with a variety of responses,

again reflecting the individual nature of response preferences from instructor to instructor. Of the twenty-three instructors who responded to the question, only three indicated that they commented mostly on drafts with this technology. Fourteen indicated that these comments were largely on final drafts, and seven indicated some version of both, with differing emphases. For example, one respondent wrote:

> My comments are more content-driven on early drafts since I want students to think of the overall argument in the initial revising phases. As the versions become more refined, I spend more time and room on style and grammar. I do mark outright errors in the final drafts as a way of making clear to students why they received low points in the grammar/mechanics portion of their rubric grade. I can use Turnitin comments at every stage of drafting.

The teachers who included a mention of particular technologies in this open-ended response did so to indicate what kinds of assignments they gave feedback on, or that their chosen feedback technology was in use for any stage of drafting they chose. Conspicuously absent was any mention of using one commenting platform for drafts and another for final versions, although two respondents did mention using oral feedback during drafting stages and written feedback for final versions.

Weaknesses and Strengths of This Research Design

This research design has several weaknesses that can perhaps be rectified in future studies. First, I did not ask student survey respondents for demographic information. I made this decision because I assumed the less information I collected from students, the more truly anonymous the research would be and the more likely students would be to complete the survey. In subsequent inquiries, demographic information would help draw conclusions about who

prefers which method of feedback. Do young people prefer Microsoft Word comments over Turnitin's GradeMark or written feedback? Do older students prefer pen-and-paper since they may not have grown up with new computer technologies? Information such as this would work toward the goal of this project, to help instructors make informed decisions about the feedback method they employ. I did ask instructors for one bit of demographic information—the number of years they'd been teaching—to draw conclusions about whether new and veteran teachers had different practices based on their level of experience (see fig. 25). Since so many of my respondents (eighteen out of twenty-five, or 72 percent) were in the same demographic group—teaching for more than ten years—I wasn't able to easily differentiate between instructor groups with differing levels of experience. Instead, my results heavily reflect the opinions and preferences of veteran teachers, certainly the most credible instructor sample group, since they've given more feedback over the years than new teachers, but not a diverse one.

1. How many years have you taught college level English or Composition classes?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	0-2 years		1	4%
2	3-5 years		3	12%
3	5-10 years		3	12%
4	More than 10 years		18	72%
	Total		25	100%

Fig. 25. Instructor survey question 1.

Next, I did not collect artifacts from my survey respondents. Rather, this research relied on self-reported preferences and reasons for those preferences. This method allowed me to consider a larger sample size than time would have allowed if I had collected artifacts, but it eliminated any evaluation of students' real revisions or other use of instructor comments. It's entirely possible that students' predictions of the usefulness of various forms of feedback do not coincide with actual usefulness. A study considering artifacts would have to be designed separately to gauge not just opinion but real effect.

Finally, though I tried to eliminate any bias or suggestiveness in my questions, I also wanted to reduce the number of questions total included in the student survey. This meant I had to ask questions about preference with one choice first when I asked students to evaluate e-feedback screenshots. The two screen captures I showed, the first of which was of Microsoft Word comments and the second Turnitin's GradeMark, elicited responses heavily favoring MS Word. MS Word was also listed first in the question choices below the screen captures. Had the order in which I offered the screen captures and the question choices been reversed, I wonder whether the numbers would have so heavily favored the MS Word comments. Question 2 in this bank ("The screen captures 'feel' exactly the same to me.") was an attempt at double checking the results of the other two questions; the fact that twenty-nine respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement I feel at least somewhat confirms that students preferred the MS Word comments.

These results raise the issue of familiarity. From the results of student survey question 2, I found that far fewer 1102 students were acquainted with Turnitin's e-feedback platform GradeMark than I might have assumed, just twenty-two of the seventy-one respondents who answered the question (see fig. 18). When faced with a choice between two digital forms of feedback, were students simply expressing preference for what they recognized? However, by asking respondents to justify in an open-ended question their responses to the Likert scale screen capture statements, I gained better insight. Or, rather, I was able to at least partially confirm that the respondents meant what they said.

Further, after putting students' open ended responses justifying their reactions to the screen captures into categories based on the kinds of descriptors they had used when expressing their opinions, I concluded that familiarity *was* one of the factors on which students based their

preferences—and that they had good reasons for it. Thirteen respondents mentioned that they already use MS Word (so they're comfortable with interpreting feedback left this way), or that Word is the "industry standard" as one respondent wrote, and that it makes sense to use the kinds of software they'd need in their professional lives.

There also seemed to be a misconception among several of the respondents that the Turnitin GradeMark feedback was generated by a computer, website, or company rather than the instructor. One respondent wrote, "I would still listen to the comments, because the teacher is the one grading the paper. I feel more comfortable with the first because there is more reliance on the teacher and not the webpage." This assumption is understandable, as the Originality Report feedback associated with Turnitin is generated by an outside entity, but individual GradeMark feedback, as it is used to insert original instructor commentary, is not. Instructors may use drag-and-drop stock comments about grammar concerns, if they choose, but deeper comments on content must be written separately for each student essay. Without having used the technology before, some students were unable to intuit the source of the commentary. Respondents had no such misconceptions about MS Word comments, a result that would not have surfaced had I not asked this open-ended question.

Finally, I wish I had further condensed the instructor survey open-ended questions so that respondents didn't have to repeat themselves. Looking back, I could have asked some of the questions more simply; I had attempted to make sure I was asking for opinions from multiple angles so that I could be sure of the authenticity of responses. Instead, some respondents answered fewer of the questions or answered much more briefly toward the end of the survey, indicating that they were becoming fatigued. If I had been more efficient with the ways I had

asked for their opinions, perhaps I could have avoided this fatigue, and I might have also had an easier time with coding afterward.

In the next chapter, I further discuss how instructor and student e-feedback attitudes match and do not match, and I suggest how instructors may apply these study results to their future decision-making.

Chapter 5

Implications for Instructors and Researchers

After analyzing the results of the student and instructor surveys, it's possible to draw conclusions that may help instructors make better-informed decisions when deciding how to deliver feedback on student writing. Student and instructor survey responses revealed what each group values in feedback, or rather, in what order of importance they value certain criteria. Considering the preferences of both students and instructors will help instructors be more deliberate about choosing feedback methods. E-feedback can certainly be one tool to reach instructor goals when responding to student writing; it's important to remember, though, that e-feedback cannot alone address the challenges associated with the task of responding to student writing. Students may still not always read comments carefully, may react negatively to the content of comments, or may otherwise resist the directives offered in commentary on their writing. Instructors may still "over-respond" or comment more heavily on grammar and mechanics than on higher order concerns like content and organization. The interfaces in which feedback is created and the platforms by which feedback is delivered cannot on their own address these issues.

Instructors understand that their goals for responding to student writing are different from student goals for that feedback. When I respond to my students' writing, for example, I hope my feedback will inspire deep, thoughtful revision. However, my students have often mentioned that they just want to be told how to "fix" papers; our goals are at odds in this respect. Neither instructor nor student motivation has to wholly take precedence in the feedback process. There are large areas of common ground between the two parties; in the end, our goals are probably not as divergent as I sometimes imagine them to be. Further, instructors should remember that the

few vocal students who will inevitably complain about a particular feedback method do not necessarily represent the majority. This study makes a start at providing honest information about student opinion teachers might apply to their decision-making.

Below, I offer strategies for rethinking priorities when selecting feedback technologies. Instructor survey question 6 asked respondents to rank their criteria when leaving feedback in order from most important to least important. Roughly, they responded in this order: "Student ease of access to my comments," "My convenience," "Student tendency to revise based on my comments," "Any ethical concerns I have about feedback technologies," and "Digital divide concerns." Now, based on student survey results, I can suggest instructors adjust their hierarchies to more closely resemble this one. Instructors should consider:

1. Student convenience (ease of access)

Instructors already ranked "student ease of access to my comments" first, and this priority should stay where it is. Instructors want students to read their comments multiple times and to follow the advice within them. Some instructors think the platform used to deliver these comments matters when students consider how to use feedback. In the surveys, instructors reported being highly concerned with student access to comments; students, however, were much less concerned with this. Student survey question 6 reveals that for students, access is not very often an obstacle. If instructors show them how, the majority of students will access instructor comments.

Instead of trying to pick an e-feedback platform so intuitive that all students will immediately know how to gain access to comments, instructors should consider that any new platform will require class time (or online lessons like asynchronous digital tutorials) for instruction on its use before students feel comfortable enough to express true opinions on

preference. I advocate here for a measured view of introducing new e-feedback methods, one that rejects the idea that younger students in particular will already be comfortable with new programs or that they will intuit how to get the most meaning out of teacher feedback delivered through them. Instead, the adoption of any new classroom technology (or even the use of a relatively old one like Microsoft Word) will likely require at least some instructional time.

The survey results presented here show respondents reporting heavy preference for platforms with which they are already familiar. For example, one of the reasons Turnitin's GradeMark was likely so little preferred is because so few respondents had used it before. Instructors should remember that this result doesn't imply true superiority of one platform over another. Students are largely unfamiliar with Google Docs and audio comments, but if an instructor wanted to implement them, these results don't suggest students would reject them. Rather, students would need instruction on how to use them before they could become useful.

There *is* something at stake, however, when instructors choose between feedback platforms. Though students did report that they'd always read feedback however it was delivered, they do not feel as comfortable actively using that feedback within revisions unless it's delivered in a format they feel is easily accessible. Instructors hoping to adopt productive response processes should do so using a platform within which students don't perceive technology as a barrier.

2. Instructor convenience

Even with their consideration of student priorities, instructors must select the feedback method they feel makes them "do the best job," in the words of one instructor respondent. Many instructors have groups of dozens of student essays to respond to at a time, and they've developed personal preferences for how to do so efficiently and constructively. Some teachers

may comment more quickly or in more depth in one medium over others; this study does not evaluate the efficacy of adopting e-feedback as a time saving device for instructors. Instead, these survey results suggest that the same dangers and difficulties may arise no matter how feedback is delivered. Instructors should therefore highly prioritize feedback platforms they feel most comfortable using.

3. The rhetorical content of the interface

If instructors forsake their first choice—printed copies—for e-feedback because of the desire to run a paperless classroom or to otherwise proceed digitally, they can at least be aware of the ways technology restricts or suggests response. One instructor, in his or her response to survey question 5, expressed conscious rejection of the limited options e-feedback platforms versus print feedback allow: "most importantly to me, I can write all of my comments on (and all over) student papers without having to follow specific steps, protocols, or obscure instructions required by software." Though most e-feedback platforms may not be used so freely, they may be customizable to a certain degree. For example, GradeMark lets instructors add "quick marks," which, though they are "drag-and-drop," may be made individually for each user. Word allows users to change colors and display options for notes (whether to put names and timestamps on comments, among others). These and other adjustments may help e-feedback serve specific classrooms better, though it cannot realistically approximate the freedom of print feedback. Instructors should make themselves acquainted with the options and restrictions of any e-feedback platform before they adopt it, and, further, they should attempt to see the student view of a marked-up document and explore student options within the interface. In this way, instructors can realistically weigh the rhetorical cost-benefit of adopting e-feedback technology.

4. The personal feel of feedback

In this digital age, the majority of both student and instructor survey respondents still preferred printed, hard copy feedback because it is tactile, portable, and easier to look at while working on on-screen documents. Most importantly, though, both sets of respondents described handwritten feedback as more "personal" and "authentic." Students want to know their instructors took time to read everything the students have written, and despite the fact that instructors can deliver "personal" responses through any delivery method, handwritten feedback still seems to communicate "authenticity" the loudest.

Still, if feedback is to be carried out digitally instead of in hard copy, both students and instructors heavily prefer Microsoft Word notes over Turnitin's GradeMark for "authenticity," despite the fact that GradeMark is designed specifically for the purpose of providing formative (and summative) comments to students from their instructors. Students seem to perceive Word comments as the closest thing to handwritten in terms of personal touch; since the interface for Word is without the suggestions and restrictions of education-specific software like GradeMark, students feel closer to their instructors' responses. Certainly e-feedback technology that seems more personal advances instructor goals for dialogic, constructive feedback and revision.

By investigating how instructors rank their priorities when delivering feedback to students, this study revealed how highly they value student access to feedback; they wanted to ensure equal participation on both sides of the transaction. Student open-ended responses to survey questions uncovered, too, that this supportive partnership is better served by some feedback technologies over others—namely, printed feedback is still more "personal," but MS Word ranks second in this category. If a main goal of responding to student writing is not to correct, but "to show [students] through our comments why new choices would positively change their texts, and thus to show them the potential for development implicit in their own

writing," then some feedback platforms like handwritten feedback and MS Word comments do, in the eyes of student respondents, seem to be better suited to the task than others that more heavily control user behavior like Turnitin's GradeMark (Sommers, "Responding to Student Writing" 359).

5. Clarifying exactly where to apply comments

Another pattern in both student and instructor survey results reveals preferences for features of e-feedback that may mirror written feedback. For example, MS Word has several features students reported they prefer, the most frequently mentioned of which is that it better communicates what exact part of the document the comment addresses without covering up original text. This makes for easier use when essays undergo revision. One respondent wrote, "The Microsoft Word comments do not obstruct the reader, while the other document has a comment that covers up part of a paragraph. Also the Microsoft Word document allows the teacher to underline and highlight the specific sentence(s) they are referring to." GradeMark's comment "bubbles" are positioned above (or in front of) student text, whether or not they correspond to a highlighted line. When a student "hovers" over the comment bubble, what the instructor has written pops up to read. When the mouse is removed, the comment disappears again. Many students did not like this particular feature of GradeMark, and though I myself take painstaking care to position bubbles over the exact part of text to which my comments refer, this kind of commenting still may not be as clear as the highlights and marginal notes in MS Word. Though "interactivity" is a valued element of interface design, perhaps less *required* interaction makes for increased clarity within feedback technology.

6. The ecology of feedback

According to their open-ended responses to survey questions, students and instructors both want feedback delivered as close to its program of origin as possible when using e-feedback; that is, if a document was created in Word, comments on it should be returned in Word. This was not a criterion I knew to ask about, but both student and instructor respondents volunteered it separately in their answers. One instructor respondent wrote, "I feel there is an important realization with using Word that this is the same document that the students stared at over a period of time. Removing it from that program, I would think, would lessen the impact of the feedback." Students agreed. "I know Word, its [sic] where I'm likely to type my future papers," one student respondent wrote, "why wouldn't I want to keep them there? Why would I ever want to deal with a different program that isn't significantly better for word processing[?] MS Word is the industry standard (outside of hard science where laTeX gets pretty popular) so I would rather be proficient in reading and making comments there then somewhere I wont ever use in my professional life." Though to instructors, education-specific software like GradeMark has a number of merits, the choice to use it may seem odd to students who are professionally minded. As an instructor, I know I occasionally fall into the trap of assuming my students share more characteristics or goals between them than they really do—I sometimes incorrectly assume they'll all be traditional-aged, all "digital natives," or all without business experience, for example—but the truth is that students come to college from varied backgrounds and with various technology familiarities. Their eye toward efficiency in this sense, that files should make as few conversions as possible or that feedback should remain within the documents where texts are created, came as a surprise to me. Since some e-feedback platforms don't mirror technologies students will use outside of their academic lives, perhaps education-specific feedback software

risks pulling students away from the kinds of comfort with technology that would make them truly digitally literate.

Some student respondents seemed to prefer e-feedback that utilized their existing digital literacies rather than forcing them to adopt new ones. Microsoft Word comments use an established, familiar visual "language," highlight portions of text for associated notes without requiring students hover their mouse over the comment, and most clearly associate comments with the corresponding portions of essays. Though instructors have many other considerations—workload (speed of response), portability, and clarity, just to name a few—they may understand from this study that innovation isn't necessarily what students want from feedback. Instead, these student respondents seemed to be interested in clarity, usefulness, and transparency; if they receive feedback they want to be able to easily and efficiently use it.

7. Legibility

When listing reasons for adopting e-feedback technology instead of handwritten feedback on student writing, instructors repeatedly cited their poor handwriting as a reason to go digital. Only about a quarter of student respondents, however, found legibility to be a concern when asked if they'd had trouble retrieving instructor comments in the past, a relatively low number when considered against the significant majority of student respondents who expressed a preference for hard copy feedback from instructors. Instructors may still elect to forsake handwritten feedback in favor of e-feedback, but legibility concerns alone should not usually force this change. When the shift is made to using e-feedback, instructors won't be able to maintain exactly the same response practices as they did when they handwrote comments due to the differing demands of e-feedback interfaces. Instead, some teachers might choose to explore

new ways of extending the "personal," "authentic" nature of response to printed essays into the digital environment.

8. Ethical concerns with plagiarism detection technology

In their survey responses, instructors reported being much more concerned with the ethical issues surrounding the use of plagiarism detection software like Turnitin than students were. Almost all student respondents had not heard there were such ethical issues, and would require explanations of their rights and their risks when using technology like Turnitin. It's difficult, then, to place the concern over the ethics of plagiarism detection in a hierarchy of priorities. Instructors guided solely by student preferences can decide to move this consideration to the bottom of their lists, but a more responsible strategy might be to incorporate education about these ethical issues into their courses. Students won't know to be concerned unless they've been taught to be; until then, student preferences can't guide instructor decision making in this instance. If teachers do choose deliberately to adopt technologies that incorporate plagiarism detection, they should do so with an eye to their formative potential rather than just to reduce workloads (Rolfe). Instructors should adopt e-feedback technologies after considering all of these concerns.

A Realistic Perspective of E-Feedback

These ranked priorities arose from the combination of survey results and from a close look at the platforms themselves. When I analyzed both e-feedback platforms for their rhetorical content, I was heavily influenced by visual rhetorical theory, as well as my understanding of classroom power differentials explored by scholars like Stephanie Vie. I also kept in mind why instructors may be tempted to look to new technologies to carry out old practices; among other reasons, as workloads increase, instructors search for new means of both reaching students and

responding to them quickly and relevantly (37). However, I wanted to design my survey questions to address the central problem Hawisher and Self discuss in their piece "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," that too often, "writing instructors incorporate computers into their classes without the necessary scrutiny and careful planning that the use of any technology requires" (55). I wanted this research to contribute to the informed decisions teachers might make; when viewed in light of what students prefer and what instructors intend, which technologies can best serve the writing response process?

Unfortunately, the answers don't come easy. Neither e-feedback platform I investigated in this study provides the perfect setting for responding to student writing instructors might at least party anticipate when they adopt e-feedback technology. Rather, these survey results suggest that e-feedback platforms *do* carry rhetorical weight, if only because students may have preexisting preferences that bias them in favor of using some feedback technologies more readily than others. Resistance to particular programs or websites could significantly hinder students' engagement when receiving comments from instructors on their writing; this problem first arose when computer ownership became commonplace and multiple response options appeared. Instructors have not finished—and may never finish—addressing it.

However, survey responses do reveal students self-report at least partial engagement with the response process no matter what feedback platform instructors choose. Further, since neither the instructor nor student respondent group expressed consensus on the platform it prefers, the task facing instructors is instead to weigh the two groups' priorities against one another and arrive at an individual compromise. No single response method will be ideal for every instructor and every student; instead instructors shouldn't be afraid to mix their own priorities with their students'. For example, if an instructor feels much more comfortable working in GradeMark than

Word, that comfort may lead to the security and confidence that will support pursuing a feedback philosophy that will best serve her students. In another example, if an instructor likes working with printed student writing, but feels he would risk losing student papers (or might write illegibly on them) if he collected hard copies of essays, then adopting an e-feedback platform will certainly improve the writing response process with his students. Instructors should feel empowered to highly value their own convenience when that convenience allows them the liberty to do their jobs well. The feedback platform does not determine the quality or depth of the response process. Only instructors themselves can do that.

E-feedback technology, in the end, does not address many of the perennial challenges of responding to student writing; instructors will still have to spend many hours commenting on papers and students will still have to put forth effort to utilize responses productively. It can, however act as a modern tool to facilitate dialogue on revision between instructors and students. In order to counteract my own fears that students will dismiss or not even read my comments on their writing, or worse that they might misunderstand my responses, I have begun to incorporate small lessons into my class meetings about how to interpret my feedback, both within the digital platform and with respect to the kinds of comments I tend to give. These lessons help to curb my own anxiety about e-feedback technology acting as a barrier between my students and myself, especially since I adopted it because I hoped it might do the opposite.

Just as it has always been necessary to provide instruction to students on how to use instructor responses within nontraditional feedback practices like Haswell's "Minimal Marking" or how to interpret shorthand comments like "AWK," it is now equally vital to show students what is expected of them when feedback comes to them electronically. The biggest danger is expecting students to intuit both how to access and how to interpret e-feedback. Once students

understand the platform, the comments themselves still hold most of the communicative potential of the response process. The quality of feedback can only be strengthened or weakened—not wholly determined—by the e-feedback platform instructors choose.

Implications for Future Research

Several avenues for future research could further illuminate the ways students respond to e-feedback. To begin, surveys should investigate student self-reported reactions to many more visual examples of e-feedback interface screen captures, or perhaps researchers should even ask students to move through interfaces and record responses as they go. The limited nature of the visual element of the surveys in this study restricts insight into students' natural reactions to different platforms, and relies quite heavily on previous educational experience and preference factors other than visual ones. Future research can more fully investigate the visual nature of these responses, as those results would better marry rhetorical analysis with survey methods.

The other studies I propose should move beyond self-reported preference and attempt to collect empirical data using artifacts of student writing and instructor comments. Research like this may accomplish several goals. First, tracking artifacts may uncover true quality or incidence of revision when feedback is created and distributed in different electronic contexts. This strategy will help reveal whether students' self-reported preferences about feedback platforms actually reflect their performance in revision tasks when presented with the same feedback in different forms.

Second, researchers may be able to discover whether, when interacting with different e-feedback platform interfaces, instructors really *create* different kinds of responses. My conclusion after performing this research project is that instructors still play the biggest role in the quality of feedback since they are in control of the content of their comments wherever they

choose to respond to their students' writing. This is an assumption that needs to be confirmed by research that tests instructors' ability to alternately take advantage of and resist constructive or counterproductive influences arising within e-feedback interfaces. Studies like these may investigate Teena Carnegie's view of computer interfaces fulfilling the argumentative role of "exordium," the element that prepares audiences for persuasion (171). In this view, the interface, instead of making an argument itself, serves as the vessel through which these arguments may be made, offering restrictions and suggestions along the way. Researchers should attempt to discover the extent to which e-feedback platforms either serve as preparatory elements of arguments or begin to influence the content of the arguments themselves.

Finally, other researchers should attempt to duplicate the results of the surveys I conducted in this study to ascertain whether the student and instructor preferences reported here are specific to the KSU community or whether they are generalizable to the college student and instructor population on a larger scale. It may be the case that even my two chosen e-feedback platforms, Microsoft Word and Turnitin's GradeMark, are not as popularly used on other campuses. In this case, other e-feedback platforms should be investigated for their efficacy and for users' reactions to them.

What this study helped me to see is that the visual arguments suggested by interfaces may influence the self-reported preferences I investigated. Further research should look more directly at those arguments, and in doing so, these projects may be able to create a more complete, current map of the way instructors and students participate in the feedback process.

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Appendix A: Online Survey for Students (Qualtrics Transcript)

Student e-feedback Survey
Q1 (Please select all that apply.) In a college class, an instructor has returned comments to me on a piece of my writing by using:

- Turnitin's GradeMark (either by itself or through D2L) (1)
- Microsoft Word comments (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" features) (2)
- A PDF of comments inserted into my original file. (3)
- A printed copy (hard copy) of my writing with handwritten or typed comments added. (4)
- Feedback in D2L dropbox (instead of comments within the document itself) (5)

Q3 Please select one response for each line below.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I consider myself comfortable using online technologies. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I consider myself comfortable with downloading and using documents from the Web. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q4 Please rank your most preferred way of receiving teacher comments on a piece of your writing. (1 is most preferred method. 5 is least preferred method.) Simply drag the bars into the right order (it will assign the top choice #1, the second #2, and so on).
_____ Printed copy (either handwritten or typed comments) (1)
_____ Microsoft Word document (2)
_____ PDF (3)
_____ Turnitin's GradeMark (4)
_____ Feedback in D2L dropbox (instead of comments within the document itself) (5)

Q5 Please explain why you ranked the commenting methods the way you did in the previous question. What do you like about your most preferred way(s) of receiving teacher comments on your writing? What don't you like about the others?

Q6 Please select one response for each line below.

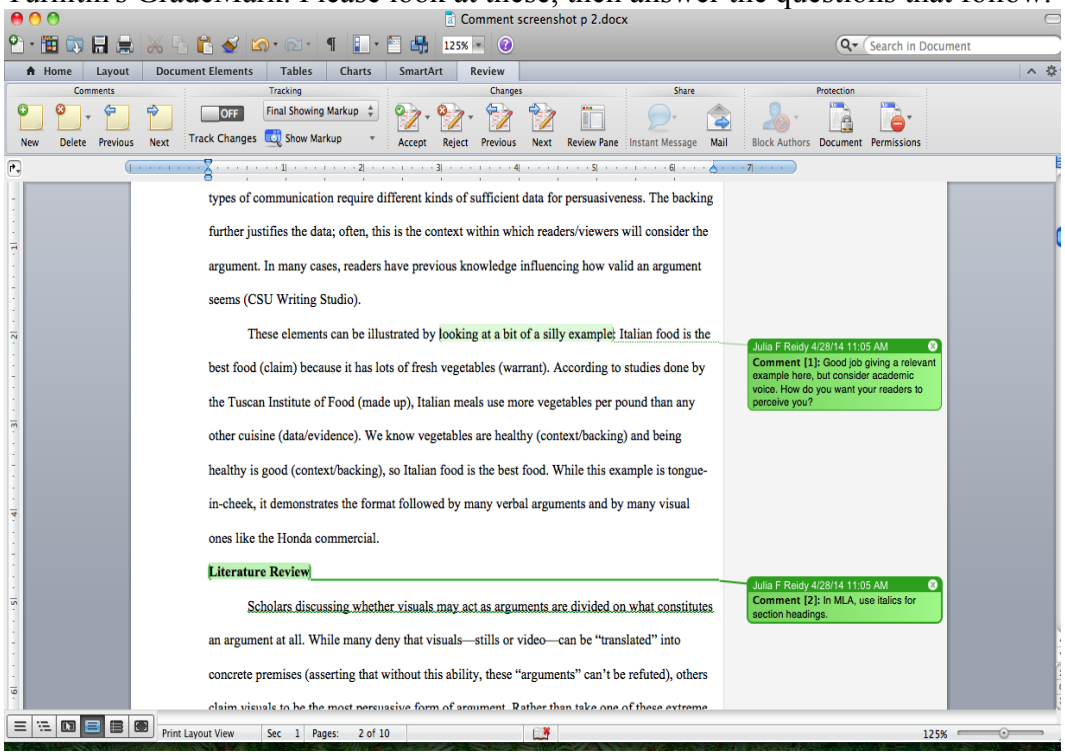
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I am more likely to follow teacher suggestions on my writing if they are given to me through a method I prefer (printed copy, digital file, etc.). (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in a Microsoft Word file in the past. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have had difficulty accessing teacher comments in Turnitin's GradeMark in the past. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have had trouble reading or otherwise using teacher comments on a printed copy of my writing in the	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

past. (4)					
When I receive feedback on a piece of my writing from a teacher, I always read the comments. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The format in which teachers send me my comments determines whether I will read them. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

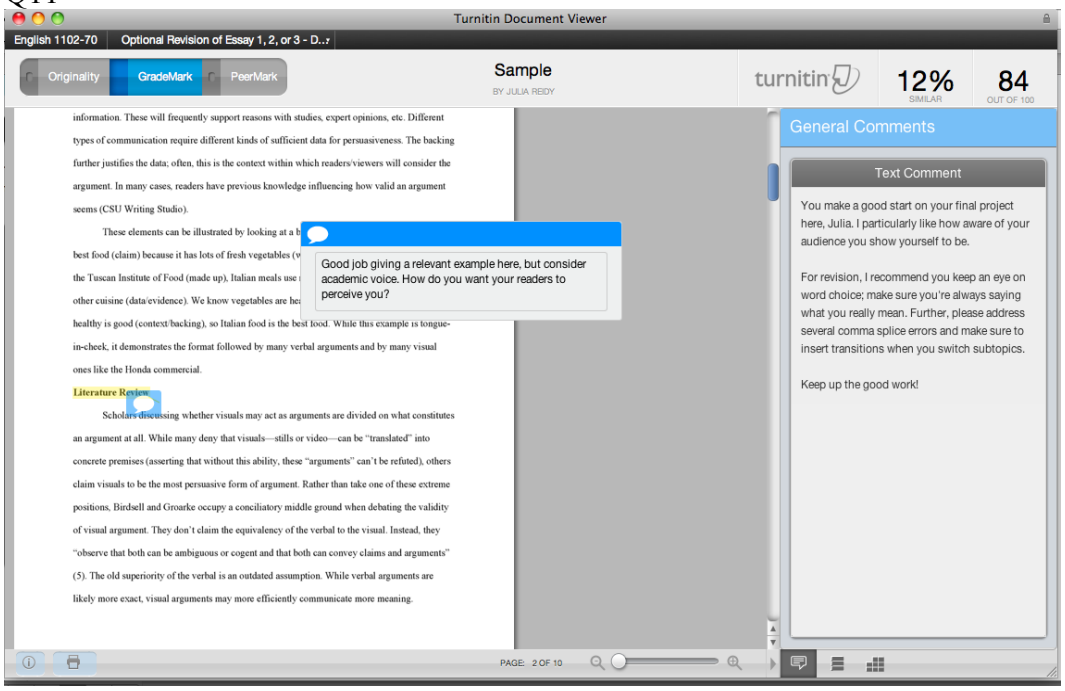
Q7 Has a teacher ever given you feedback in another way that isn't listed here? What way? Did you find it helpful? Why or why not?

Q8 Are you aware that there are any ethical debates about using Turnitin for student work? If so, do you have any concerns about using it?

Q9 The next two screen captures show the same comment left on the same paper in two different formats. The first shows a note left in Microsoft Word. The second shows a comment left in Turnitin's GradeMark. Please look at these, then answer the questions that follow.



Q11



Q12 Consider the two screen captures you've just seen, and pick one answer for each line below.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)

			(3)		
I would rather receive comments from my teacher like the ones in the first screen capture than the second. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The screen captures "feel" exactly the same to me. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
In a revision, I would be more likely to follow the advice in the first screen capture than the second. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q13 Please comment on why you made the choices you did in the previous question. Why did the comments in one photo or the other seem more or less helpful to you?

Appendix B: Online Survey for Instructors (Qualtrics Transcript)

Instructor E-feedback Survey

Q1 How many years have you taught college level English or Composition classes?

- 0-2 years (1)
- 3-5 years (2)
- 5-10 years (3)
- More than 10 years (4)

Q2 In a college class you've taught, please select all of the methods you've used to return your comments to students on their writing.

- ❑ Turnitin's GradeMark (1)
- ❑ Microsoft Word file (in-text comments or the "review" or "notes" feature) (2)
- ❑ PDF (3)
- ❑ Handwritten or typed comments on a printed copy of the student's writing (4)
- ❑ Feedback in a course management system like D2L's dropbox (instead of comments within the file itself) (5)

Q3 Please select one response for each line below.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I consider myself comfortable using online technologies. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I consider myself comfortable with downloading and using documents from the Web. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q4 Please rank the below methods of commenting on students' writing in order of preference (1 is most preferred; 6 is least preferred). Simply drag and drop choices into place. The choice at the top will be read as #1, the second as #2, and so on.
_____ Comments either handwritten or typed on printed copies of student work. (1)
_____ Microsoft Word notes (2)
_____ Turnitin's GradeMark (accessed by itself--not through a course management system like D2L) (3)
_____ Turnitin's GradeMark (accessed through a course management system like D2L) (4)
_____ PDF (5)
_____ Feedback in a course management system like D2L's dropbox (instead of comments within the file itself) (6)

Q5 Please comment on the rankings you made above. Why do you prefer the methods you prefer? What do you like about them? What do you dislike about the ones you do not prefer?

Q6 Please rank in order of importance the below criteria you use to pick a commenting method. (1 is most important; 5 is least important.) Simply drag and drop choices into place. The choice at the top will be read as #1, the second as #2, and so on.
_____ My convenience (1)
_____ Student ease of access to my comments (2)
_____ Student tendency to revise based on my comments (3)
_____ Any ethical concerns I have about feedback technologies (4)
_____ Digital divide concerns--gaps in digital literacy or access to technology between groups of my students (5)

Q7 Please elaborate on your rankings in the previous question. Why are the criteria you ranked as important most important to you? Why are the criteria you ranked as least important not as important? Do you use any criteria not mentioned?

Q8 What commenting method are you currently using in the classes you teach? Why? What do you think of it?

Q9 Do you or have you used any commenting methods not mentioned in this survey? Do you still use them? Why or why not?

Q10 Are the comments you leave on student writing typically on drafts in-process or on final versions of essays? Do you prefer different means of commenting for different situations?

Julia F. Reidy

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EDUCATION:

Master of Arts in Professional Writing, In-Progress, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw. GA, 2014
- Concentration: Rhetoric and Composition.
- Secondary Concentration: Creative Writing
- Capstone thesis: "Student and Instructor Responses to E-Feedback"

Bachelor of Arts, Journalism, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2007
- Graduated magna cum laude with honors

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Kennesaw State University, Fall 2013-present

- **English 1101 - Composition I**
  - First-year composition concentrating on argumentation, rhetoric.
  - Two sections Fall 2013, two sections Fall 2014. 26 students per section.

- **English 1102 - Composition II**
  - First-year composition concentrating on research.
  - Two sections Spring 2014. 26 students per section.

Writing Center Tutor, Kennesaw State University**,** August 2012-present
- Conferenced with students on their writing (across disciplines, including ESL) to suggest invention and revision plans.
- Instructed students in appropriate formatting and citation for MLA, APA, and CMS.
- Completed advertising and graphic design projects for the KSU Writing Center.
- Planned consistent branding, helped with ad placement and online presence.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Associate Editor, Cities on the Cheap, Atlanta, GA: May 2013-August 2013
Freelance Writer, ***Atlanta Music Guide***, ***Tiny Mix Tapes, Flagpole Magazine, Creative Loafing Atlanta,*** **etc.**, Atlanta, GA: September 2007-July 2012
Writer and Freelance Designer, ***Stomp and Stammer*****,** Atlanta, GA: September 2007-July 2012
Editor, ***The AutoPILOT Magazine*****,** Atlanta, GA: September 2010-January 2011
Freelance Designer and Writer, ***Charleston Review*****,** ***30-A Review*** **and** ***Piedmont Review***, Atlanta, GA: July 2008-April 2009
Local Editor, Paste:Local Atlanta, Atlanta, GA: July 2008-December 2008

PUBLICATIONS:

Scholarly Publications

Reidy, J. "The Writing Game: A Q&A with Javy Gwaltney, MAPW Grad Student of the Year." *The English Broadside (*Kennesaw State's English Department newsletter), Spring 2014

Selected Professional Publications

Reidy, J. "Review: Bon Iver – *Bon Iver.*" *Stomp and Stammer Magazine*, 2011
---. "Cover Story: Ambassador Jet Center." *The AutoPILOT Magazine,* 2011

---. "Music Feature: Bear In Heaven comes to fruition outside the South." *Creative Loafing Atlanta,* March 3, 2010
---. "Music Feature: Frightened Rabbit's Winter of Mixed Drinks." *Flagpole Magazine,* Oct. 19, 2010
---. "Music Review: Abe Vigoda: *Crush*." *Tiny Mix Tapes,* 2010
---. "Music Review: Frog Eyes: *Paul's Tomb: A Triumph.*" *Tiny Mix Tapes*, 2010
---. "Venice Is Sinking talk *Sand & Lines* and rising above." *Creative Loafing Atlanta's Crib Notes Blog*, June 15, 2010.
---. "Timothy Michael Gallery: A Fisheye Lens on Roswell Art." *The Piedmont Review,* March/April 2009
---. "Cover Story: Dark Meat." *Southeast Performer Magazine*, 2008
---. "Cover Story: Modern Skirts." *Southeast Performer Magazine,* 2008

MASTERS CAPSTONE THESIS:

Student and Instructor Responses to E-Feedback (Empirical study with review of the literature)

- 88 pages
- Faculty committee: Dr. Laura McGrath and Dr. Letizia Guglielmo
- Proposal completed Spring 2014. Empirical research (student and instructor surveys, web grading platform rhetorical analysis) completed Summer 2014. Project completed Fall 2014.

CONFERENCES:

Accepted to present:

- Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference, Nashville, TN, February 19-21, 2015 (As a member of a 5-person panel)

Awaiting response to proposals:

- Student Success in Writing Conference, Savannah, GA, April 17-18, 2015
- College English Association Conference, Indianapolis, IN, March 26-28, 2015

SERVICE ACTIVITIES:

- Initial reviewer for Georgia Writers Association Awards 2013.
- Writer for Kennesaw English Department Newsletter April 2014.

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Winner of Kennesaw State University's Robert Hill Award in Graduate Writing (Rhetoric and Composition) 2014

RELEVANT COURSEWORK:

- Issues and Research in Professional Writing
- Understanding Writing as Process
- Teaching Writing in High Schools and Colleges
- Readings for Writers: Magical Realism
- Writing the Biography
- Teaching the Essay
- Visual Rhetoric
- Research Methods for Writers
- Digital Technology in the Writing Classroom

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

National Council of Teachers of English
College English Association