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How Does Focus on Form Affect the Revising Processes of ESL Writers?: Two Case Studies

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Abstract—This study considers the ongoing "grammar correction debate" in second language writing by examining how a focus on formal accuracy would affect the revising processes of ESL writers and the students' written products. A case study approach was used to find out how two ESL students would respond in the two different rewriting situations: (a) when there is no explicit expectation for them to produce grammatically correct text, and (b) when this expectation was clearly present. The protocol analysis and interviews with the participants showed that students' revision processes had not been affected by the kind of instruction and expectation given. In both tasks, students concentrated on building up their content, rather than attending to grammar and mechanics. The explicit instruction to work on the grammar did not result in a better written product in terms of formal accuracy, either. Based on these findings, this study claims that teaching and attending to grammar may not necessarily inhibit students from developing fluency and that ESL students do need guidance in developing skills in both rhetorical and formal aspects of English composition to be able to produce academically acceptable prose.

Index Terms—focus on form, grammar correction, L2 writing

I. INTRODUCTION

This study was launched to answer some of the critical questions involving the controversy about the efficacy of form-focused instruction in ESL composition classrooms. That is, does emphasis on formal correctness have a negative influence on ESL writers as they become skillful writers in English? Is emphasis on fluency more important and effective to help second language writers produce academically acceptable prose? Finally, in what methods can ESL composition teachers attend to grammar?

The process approach, originally developed by composition specialists in the field of first language (L1) writing, has also helped shape theoretical discussions on its efficacy with second language writers. Although second language writers are not a single definable entity as their needs vary as greatly as their diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds, major theoretical frameworks have been those laid by L1 composition scholars. However, it is imperative for ESL writing teachers to first understand what the various findings and arguments from the L1 writing research mean to *their* individual ESL students in their specific situations, and one of the best ways to come to the answers is by looking at the internal process of writing and revising through empirical research on the influence of grammar focus on the performance of ESL writers. Knowledge gained from such research will help close the gap between what the ESL writing teachers believe about teaching writing and what the students actually do when they write.

This study examines the internal processes of revision of the two ESL students using a "thinking-aloud" protocol technique. By analyzing the revising behaviors in two different revision tasks, which involve two different instruction conditions, this study examines how teachers' focus on grammar may affect the composing behaviors of their students. Although this study used a small sample, the insights gained from this research will contribute to ESL composition theory by raising important questions about common ESL pedagogical practices. First of all, this study will help teachers better understand the composing processes of ESL students in comparison with L1 composition processes, which will lead ESL writing teachers to question their own assumptions and classroom practices so that they can ultimately develop composition techniques which adequately reflect the unique needs of second language writers. In doing so, this study will help clear the confusion that many ESL composition teachers may have in choosing between the two seemingly opposing composition theories in planning their classroom instruction. Secondly, by analyzing the characteristics of the revision strategies of two selected ESL students, this study will also enable ESL teachers to understand what could be responsible for their own students' failure to produce successful writing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Beginning in the late 1960s, L1 composition theorists presented criticism of the traditional approach that focused on acquiring formal accuracy, as they challenged the existing assumption that "writing is basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns" (Kroll, 1990, p. 14). The revised perspective viewed writing as a product of a complex, recursive process, and therefore, the focus was placed on the process, rather than on the product. Growing out of this idea was that classroom instruction that focused on correctness was ineffective and studying grammar does not lead to improved writing (Hillocks, 1986, p. 138).

This new perspective reached the mainstream of ESL writing classroom by the late 1980s, as an increasing number of scholars argued that writing is not a linear process. Subsequently, terms such as "accuracy," "patterns," and "form" began to disappear in the composition texts during the 1980s and process-oriented terms such as "making meaning," "invention," "multiple drafts," and "peer review" began to appear. As L1 composition researchers such as Perl (1980), Sommers (1980), and Reither (1985) spoke strongly against the traditional, formulaic approach to teaching writing, many ESL composition professionals began to transport the major theoretical arguments seeded in L1 composition into the second language writing. This new approach gained general approval as studies done by ESL composition researchers such as Zamel (1983) and Raimes (1985) began to corroborate findings of L1 composition studies. Second language researchers such as Krashen (1984) and Raimes (1985) argued that techniques such as controlled composition and imitation were not compatible with the process approach, as composing means discovering meaning. Zamel (1983) reported that the writing processes of her advanced ESL writers showed recursiveness, like that of experienced L1 writers, and called for "a collaborate relationship with our students, drawing attention to problems, offering alternatives, and suggesting possibilities" (p. 97).

With this new emphasis upon the process and the writer, L2 writing practitioners began to omit grammar instruction, believing that it should be "delayed until writers have grappled with ideas and organization" (Raimes, 1991, p. 410). On a stronger, more definite note, Researchers such as Truscott (1996), Kepner (1991) and Sheppard (1992) argued that grammar correction is not only ineffective, but also harmful because focus on accuracy causes stress to students, and "students shorten and simplify their writing in order to avoid corrections" (Truscott, 1996, p. 355).

The debate is ongoing both in L1 and L2 writing classrooms as some L1 composition researchers, continued to claim that all students can benefit from grammar instruction, and that students need guidance in understanding and applying those aspects of grammar that are most relevant to writing. Einarsson (1999), for instance, asserted that grammar knowledge is essential because the knowledge heightens awareness of language, thereby leading to improved writing. Researchers such as Weaver (1996) and Noguchi (1991) also tried to show teachers how grammar can be effectively taught in the context of writing. Ferris (1999; 2002; 2004) presented various counterarguments to those made by Truscott and others who strongly believe that grammar correction does not work and is harmful, kindling a long lasting, inconclusive debate about whether or not teachers should attend to grammatical errors.

Various researchers in the past pointed out limited use of process-based instruction alone in L2 writing classrooms, arguing that rewarding students' fluency, at the expense of accuracy, may delay the development of writing skills needed to produce academically acceptable prose. Raimes (1985) called for reconsidering the place of formal instruction in ESL composition. Eskey (1983) similarly argued that even if students somehow learn to communicate, mastery of the forms does not take care of itself (p. 319), and therefore argued that formal instruction did have a critical place in L2 writing. The output theory in second language acquisition also provided a theoretical perspective for reconsidering the place of accuracy. As Terrel (1991) put it, "the learners' own output can become itself input to the acquisition process" (p. 61), signifying that grammar instruction has an important place for L2 writers (see Rutherford, 1987 and Van Patten, 1996).

Fathman and Whalley (1990) made an interesting observation about the role of grammar focus when they studied the revised products of their ESL writers. They discovered that when ESL students rewrote their papers with content feedback only, they tended to make more grammar mistakes, even though their content improved. Fathman and Whalley further pointed out that the identification of grammatical errors had a greater effect on the improvement of grammar accuracy than general feedback on content had on the improvement of content. In a study of 242 college-level ESL students which examined the role of grammar instruction in L2 writing, Yim (1998) also found that students' language proficiency improve significantly after formal grammar instruction. Based on her research findings, she argued that grammatical knowledge is an important element in gaining proficiency in all four skills areas including writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Horowitz (1986) also claimed that process-based instruction may mislead students by giving "a false impression of how university writing will be evaluated" (p. 143). He further charged that a process approach had an "almost exclusive concern with psycholinguistic, cognitive and affective variables" (1986, p. 446).

Regardless which position they take in this debate, researchers all agree that more research is needed (Ferris, 2004). Previous studies that center around this debate have mainly based their arguments on the product analysis to measure formal accuracy, and few studies have been conducted to reveal the internal process of writing. The goal of the current study is not to examine whether or not focus on form leads to more grammatically accurate written products, but rather to examine how the focus on formal accuracy affects the writing *process,* and to test some bold claims made by researchers and practitioners who have argued that attending to formal accuracy is counter-effective and harmful because it limits their capacity to produce more complex writing.

III. METHOD

Audiotaping or videotaping students while writing has been a common research tool for studies of the composing process. Although composition research literature has questioned the credibility and validity of protocol analysis (e.g., Cooper & Holzman 1983; Voss 1983), it has been found that L2 studies that have used the protocol analysis technique has produced more useful data than those that have not.

This study employed a thinking-aloud technique as a major research method and combined it with interviews and questionnaires. The protocol analysis not only made it possible to see where the students struggled most in the course of writing and what might best explain the students' difficulties, it also helped distinguish performance errors from competence errors.

Participants

I selected two ESL students who were enrolled in ESL English composition course that I previously taught. The course paralleled the freshman composition requirement for native speakers of English in its focus on analytical and research-oriented papers. The selection of the participants was done after reviewing in-class essays students wrote on the first day of class. All eight students in the class demonstrated their needs in grammar instruction to some extent, but I specifically considered two things when selecting the subjects: First, I wanted to exclude immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for several years because many, if not all, immigrant students' previous educational backgrounds would be similar to those of L1 students. Second, I wanted to select students whose writing contained frequent grammatical errors because this study involved a heavy focus on grammar. Based on these criteria, I chose two subjects—one female, the other male, who happened to be quite different in their backgrounds. Erlin (a pseudonym), the female student, had transferred from a university in Malaysia three months previously to study business as an undergraduate student. Hogyo (a pseudonym), the male student, had come from Indonesia five years previously and was a senior majoring in industrial engineering. In order to measure their grammatical skills demonstrated in the initial writing sample, I took the first twenty sentences and counted the number of grammatical and mechanical errors and averaged them. The number of grammar mistakes per sentence of the first participant's writing sample averaged 1.2 and that of the second participant averaged 1.5. Inferring that both students' writings could possibly contain at least one or more grammatical errors in every sentence, I considered the two students as qualified candidates for the study. Both students willingly agreed to participate in the study, which was generally described to them as "a study of the composing process of ESL students." The participants received 30 extra points for their daily work, equivalent to two daily assignments.

Data Collection

The data came from three sources: thinking-aloud protocols from four videotaped writing sessions; analysis of written products, including the originals and the revisions; and information gained from a number of audio-taped interview sessions with students. All of these sessions took place in the ESL writing lab when the lab was closed to other students.

The initial interview sessions provided information about the students' backgrounds related to writing and language learning. Information gained from the interviews provided a realistic perspective from which to analyze each student's overall process of writing. The initial interviews were followed by an orientation to the thinking-aloud technique. I met with each student individually at the ESL writing center to explain this technique and demonstrate it by completing a short writing task. The task modeled was unrelated to either of the two experimental tasks to be used in the study. I emphasized that continuous talking was the most important thing about providing a protocol for this study. Then I invited each student to practice giving a five-minute protocol while doing a practice writing task. To reduce distraction, I left the room and had each student talk into a tape-recorder while practicing the thinking-aloud technique. At the end of five minutes, I returned to the room and played back the tape to make sure the student had understood the thinking-aloud technique.

The participants performed two different writing tasks, and each task consisted of two videotaped sessions which lasted about fifty minutes each. Since lapse of time between drafts is important in the studies of revision processes, I planned the revision sessions to take place one day after the initial writing sessions. In the revision sessions, students were asked to rewrite their first drafts without having received any feedback, using their internalized standards. I hoped this approach would reveal whether students would recognize and correct grammar mistakes made during their initial effort to produce content.

Task 1

In the first session, the participants were invited to write to a real or an imaginary friend about American culture. The following instruction was given in task 1, session 1:

After arriving in the U.S., most international students experience problems adapting to the new culture. Suppose that one of your friends in your country is planning to study at an American university and has asked you to tell him/her what to expect in the new culture. Write an essay in which you describe what you have learned about American culture since you came to the U.S. Include any suggestions that may help your friend to adjust to American culture.

In the second session, they revised the preliminary draft produced in the first session. In asking the subjects to revise their writing, the instructions for the first task did not specify any areas to focus. Teacher expectation and intervention were zero to ensure that students applied their own knowledge and assumptions about writing and revision. The students were instructed to do as follows:

In a moment, I will hand back the paper you wrote last time, in the next forty-five minutes, please revise the paper as much as you can.

Task 2

The second writing task took place exactly one week after the first week. In this task, the students were invited to write about their own culture and were given the following instruction:

A group of American students are going to Malaysia/Indonesia to study as exchange students at a university. Before they leave the U.S., they want to get some information about your culture so that they know what to expect when they arrive there. Write an essay in which you introduce your culture and suggest ways to adjust to it.

Aside from the writing prompt, the second task differed from the first task primarily in the instruction given in the rewriting session. The instruction for the second revision was phrased in such a way that would reveal how grammar emphasis affected the outcome as well as the process of their revision. The students were directed to do the following:

In the next forty-five minutes, you are going to revise your paper in which you introduced your culture. Please try to make it as polished as possible, paying extra attention to grammar such as verb forms, tenses, articles, prepositions, sentence structures, word choice, etc.

Final interviews were held two weeks later after I had transcribed all the thinking-aloud protocols. This session allowed me to clarify any part of their verbalizations in the protocols that needed explanations, interpretations, or comments. Students were invited to reflect on the writing and rewriting sessions and address any difficulties or problems related to the writing tasks or to the thinking-aloud technique. Students were asked open-ended questions to prompt them to assess their own performance and to compare and contrast the two writing and rewriting sessions and explain whether, and how, the different instructions affected their writing.

Data Analysis

After incorporating the annotations the students provided in the final interview sessions, I completed a final version of each transcription. I divided the protocol transcripts into one-minute segments to be coded. Then I coded each segment using the final coding categories adapted from Perl (1978) and Johnson (1985). It was necessary to modify these coding systems because Perl's coding system, designed for a study of L1 writers, needed to be refined to aid in the identification of writing behaviors related specifically to revision strategies. Johnson's coding system, while useful in its modification of Perl's system to reflect L2 writing strategies, also needed to be adapted for this study because her coding system contains only two broad categories under rewriting strategies—Revising [R] and Editing [e]. I created a much more detailed coding scheme, which sub-categorizes several important types of revising strategies. The revised coding system is provided below along with a brief explanation of each behavior (see Appendix for full protocol charts):

1. **P**: General planning—discussing how one will proceed with the writing of the paper.
2. **p**: Local planning—talking about what idea will come next
3. **T**: Topic—repeating or rephrasing the topic or key words related to get a "handle" on it
4. **Ex**: Exploring—voicing ideas on the topic; tentatively finding one's way
5. **W**: Writing—composing aloud in such a way that what one is saying is actually being written at the same time
6. **WS**: Writing silently
7. **rd**: Reading related to the directions
8. **rp**: Reading related to one's written product
9. **R**: Revising; under the broad category of revising, the following sub-codes are used
    a. Revision in the content aspect
        i. **RC-add**: adding words, phrases, sentences, or syntactic markers
        ii. **RC-del**: deleting words, phrases, sentences, or syntactic markers
        iii. **RC-pg**: adding or deleting paragraphs
        iv. **RC-org**: making organizational changes
    b. Revision in the grammatical aspect
        i. **RG-v**: making or considering changes in verb form
        ii. **RG-pr**: adding or deleting prepositions
        iii. **RG-pun**: adding, deleting, or considering the use of punctuation
        iv. **RG-sp**: considering or changing spelling
        v. **RG-ss**: attempting to correct the sentence structure
        vi. **RG-art**: indicating concern for articles
        vii. **RG-etc**: other grammatical and mechanical aspects
10. **Reph**: Rephrasing the existing sentence(s) by recasting them, rather than correcting grammar
11. **wc**: Changes in word choice
12. **wf**: Trying to decide the word form
13. **voc**: Searching vocabulary
14. **C**: Conversing—voicing comments or questions about the task or about other matters
15. **A(+)/A(-)**: Assessing—making a judgment about one's writing; may be positive or negative
16. **s**: Periods of silence—very long pauses of ten seconds or more
17. **?**: Unintelligible segments

After each segment was coded, a chart was created to which all the category codes were transferred. This chart was used to analyze the general patterns in the writing and revising behaviors of each student (see Appendix for full protocol charts of revision process).

To ensure the inter-rater reliability of the process protocol and the product data, I had an outside verifier determine a measure of agreement with my judgment. A total of twenty one-minute segments were randomly selected from the transcriptions of the thinking-aloud protocols of each participant. An ESL teacher analyzed these segments and recoded the writing behaviors using the same criteria as the initial analysis. There was an 85 percent agreement.

IV. RESULTS

Case Study 1

Erlin was a 23 year old female from Malaysia, majoring in business management. At the time of the study, she had been in the U.S. for only four months. She showed great enthusiasm for participating in the study. She expressed excitement by saying, "I am very much interested in my own writing process. I want to improve my writing skill!" She reported 16 years of instructions in English with a major emphasis on translation of written texts. She had a strong motivation for learning English. "I'd rather write in English than in Malay or Chinese. I like English so much," she said. In comparing her English composition classes in Malaysia and those in the U.S., Erlin said that her high school composition classes included grammar instruction and her teachers emphasized grammar and mechanics the most in high school. She felt that increasing her vocabulary would make her become a better writer in English.

Task 1, Session 1.

Erlin spent over an hour, producing a 13 paragraph essay. She spent the first three minutes brainstorming, rereading the topic a couple of times as she tried to come up with ideas to write about. Before she began writing, she wrote down a few points on scratch paper, even though she did not include all of them later in her writing.

Although most of her paragraphs were short and not sufficiently developed, her writing showed that her major focus was on generating as many ideas as possible. One reason that she could produce a relatively long paper (616 words) was that the topic was a real one for her. She said she was glad when she received the topic because she had "the same case." Another major characteristic in her writing process was rereading portions of her essay a number of times in the course of writing. Whenever she completed a paragraph, she went back to the beginning of her writing and reread all the segments.

In producing her essay, Erlin made only a couple of grammar corrections, and she spent most of her time finding suitable words and coming up with ideas for her description of America. What inhibited her the most in the process of writing was lack of vocabulary, not grammar.

The major part of the protocol reflects Erlin's vigorous effort to build up the content. Fifty-five minutes into the session, she began to write the conclusion. And then, she used the same strategy she had used when writing the introduction and body, reading the previous sentences and paragraphs over. One hour into the session, Erlin once again went back to the beginning of her paper and began to read the whole paper. One of the biggest changes she made during this time was to cross out three sentences about the weather. She further rephrased several sentences. She attempted to alter grammatical aspects twice as she changed "have made" to "had made", and "concern about" to "concern on".

Task 1, Session 2.

Erlin started her revision by reading the first paragraph she had written in the previous session. Then she rewrote the first paragraph, not by transferring each sentence from the draft, but by creating a whole new paragraph, without referring back to her pervious draft sentence by sentence. Her revised paragraphs were much longer than the ones in the previous draft. She developed her previous paragraphs by providing examples and further explanation. In her revision, she rearranged the paragraph order, as she re-organized her subtopics. For example, she decided to omit the paragraph on "job efficiency," and instead included freedom of speech. Furthermore, she deleted her previous discussion on road signs, traffic rules, and tax.

In this revision session, Erlin's major attempts were made to develop her previous paragraphs, rephrase some key words, and rearrange the topics. Her revision had 751 words, but the number of paragraphs decreased from 13 to 11. The number of RC (revision in the content aspect) was 26, whereas the number of RG (revision in the grammatical aspect) was only eight. Within the eight instances of RG are included a couple of verbal corrections which she did not transfer to her text. For example, in par. 3, she made a verbal correction of a grammatical mistake upon reading aloud, "They taught me and guided a lot when I just arrived in U.S." by inserting the pronoun *me* before *guide*, and yet failed to recognize it in writing. Nine times, she rephrased the existing sentences by recasting. In the protocol, the number of wc (indicating concern for word choice) was 16 and that of wf (indicating concern for word form) was only two.

She did try to correct grammatical errors a couple of times, although not always successful. For example, she changed "much more farer" to "much more far" in her concluding paragraph, which still showed an error. Most of her grammar errors did remain in the revised paper.

Task 2, Session 1.

For the second task, which asked her to introduce her home culture to American college students, Erlin produced a much shorter paper, containing five paragraphs, 437 words. Erlin's first response upon receiving the topic was, "What a difficult topic to write!" Overall, she seemed to have a hard time constructing sentences. In addition, she took a longer time to brainstorm, and of a dozen topics she came up with, she ended up using only four. Brainstorming took place as an ongoing process-she tended to stop after each paragraph to decide what to write next, instead of referring back to the

topics she had produced in the beginning. In this session, she had much more difficulty in finding the right words and did not provide an adequate conclusion.

However, she did demonstrate the same writing strategy—reading over the previous sentences and paragraphs when stuck. An example of performance error was also found as she self-corrected "angle" to "angel" when she read aloud her sentences, but failed to notice it in writing. And it is not clear whether she was aware of the difference between "bright" and "brightness" since she used them interchangeably in places where she needed the noun form, "brightness," indicating that the learner's still developing interlangauge system.

Task 2, Session 2.

In the revision session which was held the following day, Erlin produced a far more elaborate paper than her previous draft. First of all, she reconstructed her paragraphs by producing detailed information about some of her points and also by adding several new points. For example, she divided the second paragraph into two different paragraphs. She included a whole new topic of food, followed by another new paragraph on clothing, neither of which existed in the previous draft.

Throughout the writing process, Erlin used a revision strategy similar to the one she had used in the previous task; she frequently read over the previous sentences and paragraphs, rephrasing existing expressions and adding words. Although some grammatical aspects, such as tense markers, agreement and numbers, were changed in the revision, most of these changes seemed to be guesswork, rather than a knowledgeable decision. She did correct the pronoun (or spelling?) error in "It can say that" to "I can say that", but in most other cases, the changes she made counter-corrected her grammar. It seemed that she did not have systemic grammar knowledge to help self-monitor her writing. In the first paragraph of her previous draft, for instance, she used a correct preposition in "on August 31," but used a wrong preposition in the revised paper as she changed it to "at August 31." In the same way, her revised sentence "we also have different festival to celebrate," contains an error in number, which her previous sentence did not.

In sum, Erlin was not skillful in handling grammatical errors in her writing. In the follow-up interview, she said that she had to "make a guess" whenever she tried to correct grammar because she was not sure whether her decision was correct. In addition, her guesswork was not always consistent. For example, the verb form she used for "speak," was not the same as what she had used for the three race groups, "Malay," "Chinese," and "Indian." She used a third person singular for "Malay" and "Chinese," but used a plural form for "Indian." Later a later paragraph, the verb for "Chinese" switched back to the plural form as she wrote "Chinese celebrate a lot of festivals." In the same way, she used a plural form for "Indians" in the opening sentence of paragraph seven.

In terms of mechanics, she failed to catch her spelling errors. For instance, she failed to notice that she had written "angle" instead of "angel," but she read it as "angel" whenever she read it aloud. Also she corrected "in" to "is" as she read the sentence, "our national language is Malay," but she failed to notice that she had spelled it wrong. In par. 6, she self-corrected "new" to "now" when reading "and new every body wearing red clothes in all the fifteen days," but did not notice it in her writing.

Table 1 shows Erlin's different revising strategies under the two different instruction conditions. Although the table shows only five broad categories, her protocols include other behaviors that are not included in the table. There was a 9% increase in content revision in task 2, session 2 when she was instructed to focus on grammar and mechanics (from 44.8% in task 1, session 2, to 53% in task 2, session 2). On the other hand, the percentage of increase in grammar revision was 4.6%, from 13.8% in task 1, session 2, to 18.4% in task 2, session 2. The percentage of increase was greater by 4.4% in content revision than in grammar revision in task 2, session 2. Even when she was expected to work on grammar, Erlin's biggest concern was not grammar, but content. In the interview held after the revision session, she said that if she had had more time, she would have "put more content." When asked if she would have revised her paper differently if she had not been told to pay attention to grammar, she said, "No, because this is how I normally revise my paper."

TABLE 1
REVISING BEHAVIORS IN THE TWO INSTRUCTION CONDITIONS—PARTICIPANT 1

Task 1 Session 2		Task 2, Session 2	
Strategies	Number of Occurrences	Strategies	Number of occurrences
RC	26	RC	35
RG	8	RG	12
Reph	9	Reph	13
wf	2	wf	0
wc	16	wc	10

Case Study 2

Hogyo was a 25 year-old male Indonesian student, in his fourth year in industrial engineering. At the time of study, he had been in the United States for five years. He said he had started learning English when he was in the fifth grade and that he had never learned how to write essays in English in his country. The first time he ever learned writing was when he took ESL courses at a college in Chicago when he first came to the U.S.

He reported that his previous English classes in Indonesia had been centered mainly around grammar exercises and pattern drills, and there was little emphasis on oral skills. His previous ESL teachers in Chicago had emphasized how to

develop ideas and write correct sentences. He said he never enjoyed writing either in English or in Indonesian. He had become used to doing various kinds of writing through his past ESL classes but still considered writing very difficult.

Task 1, Session 1.

Compared to Erlin's, Hogyo's first paper was much shorter and so was the protocol. It took him only 40 minutes to write this paper. He composed steadily for 40 minutes, with very few pauses and almost no changes in the text he produced. Unlike Erlin, who repeated read over her previous sentences and paragraphs, Hogyo hardly revised or reread his sentences once they were written. When he completed writing, he spent the last three minutes correcting a couple of minor errors and adding a few words. He later said that he had found the writing task easy because he had previously written on a similar topic in his previous ESL class.

Hogyo made frequent grammatical and mechanical errors. Considering that he had already written a similar paper in the past, we may presume that he understood the topic and had thought about possible information to include, which theoretically gave him additional time for editing. However, throughout the writing session, he did not seem to consider it necessary to revise what he had once written. The frequent long pauses in the protocol were probably due to the difficulty he had with the thinking-aloud protocol technique, because he later commented, "I could not speak sometimes when I think."

Task 1, Session 2.

When asked to revise what he had written in the previous session, Hogyo produced an essay of similar length. Quite unlike the first session in which he plunged right into the first paragraph, this time, he spent about five minutes before writing the first sentence. He took time to review some parts of what he had written in the previous session, if not the entire paper. The revised essay still contains a number of grammar mistakes, including spelling errors in "loundry" and "prepaired," but he did make some significant changes in this revision session. He took care of almost all the sentence fragments. More importantly, he reworked his introduction. While he began with "I have…" in the previous draft, this time, he chose to start with an inclusive pronoun "Every foreigner," which may indicate his rhetorical concern for the audience. Plus, the revised introduction is quite different from the draft in that the first paragraph in the draft became two different ones in the revision. Moreover, his revised sentences are often more detailed. Even though the revised paper probably contains as many grammar errors as the previous draft, nowhere do we find any sentence to which he made only grammar correction. Rather, he rephrased entire sentences. For example, the fourth paragraph on making eye contact is much smoother and more polished, and yet none of the sentences were copied form the draft with only formal corrections.

In this session, Hogyo did not do much proofreading. When he finished his conclusion about forty minutes into the session, he read through his paper, making only a couple of minor changes as he went, such as adding sentence connectors or words to the existing sentences. And then he added the last two sentences in the conclusion and stopped writing. In his protocol, the number of content revision was 16, whereas the number of grammatical revision was four. Twice he agonized over the word choice, but never over the word form.

Task 2, Session 1.

In response to the second task, which asked him to introduce Indonesian culture to an American audience, hogyo produced an interesting essay. Not unlike the previous two sessions, Hogyo began with no brainstorming or planning. Although the number of words he wrote in each task did not significantly differ (391 words, compared to 383 words in task 1, session 1), he approached this task with more effort. Both the number and duration of pauses in the protocol were greater, possibly indicating the novelty of the writing prompt. Whereas the first paragraph was written quite spontaneously, the subsequent paragraphs did not come as quickly. When he couldn't think of an adequate point, he went to the very beginning of his paper and began to read the whole essay silently, a behavior that was not found in the last two sessions. One consistent observation that was made throughout his writing process was that Hogyo did not attend to any of the formal aspects of writing. Inconsistency in spelling and seeming carelessness in handling the mechanics suggested that he felt as far as his sentences "communicate," he needed not worry.

Task 2, Session 2.

Hogyo began by reviewing the previous draft silently for a couple of minutes. Three minutes into the session, he began to copy the first sentence from the draft without making any changes. For the rest of the session, his major focus was on rewriting the existing sentences and making his paragraph read smoothly, instead of attending to grammatical errors. This revised essay was not far superior to his previous essays in terms of formal aspects; sentence fragments as well as a number of other grammatical mechanical errors still remained. Plus, in some cases, he made more grammar mistakes as he modified original sentences. For example, as he changed the second sentence in the first paragraph, from "not so many people in America have heard about Indonesia," to "not so many people in America knows about it."

In this revision session, his major effort was made to improve the existing paragraphs by rephrasing sentences or by providing some additional explanations. The second paragraph in revision, for instance, shows much improvement in terms of clarity and coherence, if not in grammatical accuracy. According to the protocol, there were seven instances where he tried to work on the grammar of his sentences. But his effort did not bring improvement, as it resulted in more grammar errors. To illustrate, he ended up with a wrong tense as he changed the following sentence in par. 2: "I think that it is useful for you to learn the culture in the place that you *want* to say" was changed to "I think that it is useful for you to learn the culture of the place that you *wanted* to say." Examples of performance errors were shown in "spice" as

he correctly pronounced it as "spicy" but left it unchanged in writing, and "commond" was also left uncorrected although he said "common" when he read it out loud.

Although frequent and long pauses still existed in this session, Hogyo reported in the follow-up interview that this time he had found it much easier to think aloud. "I think I became used to the thinking-aloud technique after doing it so far," he said. In assessing his own writing, he said that he did not like what he had written in the previous session because he couldn't put down all the ideas he had. He said, "There was not enough time to get the ideas," but felt that the revised paper was much better.

When asked what he focused most on in this revision, he answered, "organizing points and getting ideas." Although he was instructed to pay careful attention to grammar and mechanics this time, Hogyo was obviously much more concerned about the content of his paper. He added that he found it difficult to correct grammar in his own writing, and that for him, finding the right words was a much more important necessary skill.

Table 2 shows how Hogyo's revising behaviors compare in the two different instruction conditions. The percentage of increase in content aspect was even bigger in task 2, session 2 than that of the previous participant. There was a 22% increase in content area revision. On the other hand, in the grammatical aspect, there was only an 8% increase. It was clear that for Hogyo, revision in content was clearly more important, or at least more focused on, than correcting grammar. In the follow-up interview, he said, "First I thought I was gonna focus on the grammar, but when I read my draft, I decided to change the whole thing." He added that he still wanted his instructor to correct his grammar because he felt that it was something that he could not do by himself.

TABLE 2
REVISING BEHAVIORS IN THE TWO INSTRUCTION CONDITIONS—PARTICIPANT 2

Task 1 Session 2		Task 2, Session 2	
Strategies	Number of Occurrences	Strategies	Number of occurrences
RC	16	RC	24
RG	4	RG	7
Reph	6	Reph	14
wf	0	wf	0
wc	2	wc	4

V. DISCUSSION

Previous studies on the writing processes of basic L1 writers have pointed out that less skilled writers tend to be prematurely distracted by concerns about grammar and mechanics. Therefore, it has been believed that having less skilled student writers focus on grammatical correctness during revision would only intensify their preoccupation with correctness and make them attend to less important aspects of writing and neglect more global problems in content and rhetoric. ESL composition researchers have also begun to take this approach, taking the position that the main focus on any ESL writing class should be on developing fluency, rather than accuracy, and that in the meantime, grammar will take care of itself.

The two case studies reported in this article challenges the notion that focus on correctness would negatively affect L2 students' writing and revising processes. The researcher's direction to focus on formal correctness did not have any influence on their revision processes. The written products, as well as the revising processes of the two different instruction circumstances—one that did not specify areas to focus on, and the other that did—showed no remarkable differences. In both revision sessions, the students chose to do what they considered was the most needed in revision, and for both of them, despite task-instruction differences, it meant attending to the content.

For both students, revision meant improving content by rewriting sentences and reconsidering ideas. They planned one paragraph at a time, and then after writing each paragraph, returned to their topics and decided what to write next. In most cases, the students chose to ignore such constraints as grammar or spelling so as to be able to get their ideas on paper. For Erlin, revision took place throughout the entire writing process. Most of the pauses that appeared in her protocols were related to vocabulary searching or to constructing sentences. She made quite a few significant changes in her revision in both tasks, such as combining two paragraphs and dividing one paragraph into two. She also deleted certain paragraphs and added new ones. Some of her revised paragraphs hardly resemble the original.

On the other hand, Hogyo did not make as many global changes as Erlin did. His focus was on writing clear sentences and achieving coherence between sentences by adding explanation or giving examples. Even though he lacked the ability to re-see what he had written from a fresh perspective, he did not let the grammar concerns get in the way of expressing his ideas. Nowhere did he consciously correct his own grammar or make only grammar changes.

One significant observation made throughout this study was that when the students were asked to revise their original draft, they often made wrong, inconsistent grammatical decisions. This shows that learners' interlanguage is often difficult to define even among advanced ESL students. Rather than systematic, the interlanguage system of these students exhibited inconsistencies and randomness. Also, students' competence often did not match their performance.

Another interesting pattern that emerged is that both students' writing and rewriting behaviors were apparently not influenced by what their previous teachers taught. Erlin very seldom attended to grammatical and mechanical aspects in her revision sessions even though she reported that her previous EFL classes in high school emphasized grammar rules.

She added that her previous English teachers seldom provided any comments on how to improve their compositions. "My high school teachers were quite lenient. They gave no response to our writing. They simply circled the wrong spelling, and I don't feel improvement." Hogyo also learned mostly grammar in his high school English classes and his ESL course in the U.S. also taught grammar in class.

Finally, both students struggled with vocabulary, and increasing their vocabulary was the greatest perceived need for both students. Coming up with the right word or right expressions was perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of writing. As Kim (2012) suggested,

ESL students need the lexical equipment to convey their thoughts. To do that, it is important for them to navigate through the writings of others and attend to the linguistic features and clusters of words used by native-English-speaking writers. Native speakers use prefabricated phrases, and ESL students need to increase the storage of such language chunks in order to express their thoughts freely. Without these, they will depend on circumlocution and nonnative-like patterns. (p. 38)

VI. CONCLUSION

One of the most important findings of this study was that explicit direction to focus on grammar in revision did not lead the two ESL writers to concentrate on formal aspects of writing. It did not inhibit their abilities to produce texts that are complex and rich in ideas. The protocol analysis and interviews with the participants indicated that focus on grammar is still necessary for helping these second language students to improve their writing. In addition, the findings of this study refute an assumption that unskilled ESL students are similar to basic L1 writers in that they tend to become distracted by editorial concerns. Instead, the revising processes of both students in this study did not resemble those of basic L1 writers, who mainly attend to lower-order concerns in their revision processes. As Long (1996) and Spada (1997) observed, we may hypothesize that it is not necessary for ESL writing teachers to purposefully refrain from emphasizing formal correctness for fear of inhibiting their students from developing fluency.

How then can ESL teachers provide both content and grammar instruction effectively? ESL writing teachers can address grammatical errors in students' writing by using students' real writing samples as much as possible. Teachers of ESL also should come up with syllabi which reflect emphasis on both the product and the process. Whereas it may be impossible for teachers to address all these skill areas effectively just by their *teaching*, they may achieve this goal by designing grading procedures that direct their students to both form and content. Teachers can provide students with certain grammar instruction right before students are engaged in a rewriting activity to allow the students to focus on one specific aspect of grammar at a time. This kind of specific, guided rewriting activity will prevent students from feeling "left alone" to do guesswork as they work on grammar in their writing.

Since the use of computers in composition classes has become prevalent, future researchers can examine whether or not the use of computers might affect ESL students' writing and rewriting behaviors in different way from what we have seen in this study in the handwriting research situation, and if so, how. In this study, the two students were asked to compose with pen and paper instead of a more popular method of writing on the computer because this study mainly examines how students would apply their own grammar knowledge to their revision without relying on computer tools such as a spell check and a grammar check. However, I believe that equally as important as additional case studies using longhand are studies that incorporate computers. With computers becoming a generalized tool for writers, our view of students' mechanical and grammatical errors may have to be revised because students' writing is affected not only by what the students know about writing and grammar, but by what the technology has to offer.

APPENDIX. FULL PROTOCOL CHARTS

	Participant 1		Participant 2	
Revising behaviors	Number of occurrences			
	Task 1 Session 1	Task 2 Session 2	Task 1 Session 1	Task 2 Session 2
RC	26	35	16	24
RG	8	12	4	7
reph	9	13	6	14
wf	2	0	0	0
wc	16	10	2	4
p	0	0	0	0
P	2	2	0	0
T	0	0	0	0
Ex	0	0	0	0
W	17	21	12	14
Ws	0	0	7	5
rd	1	1	0	0
rp	17	16	4	6
voc	3	2	0	0
C	1	0	1	0
A (+), A (-)	0	0	0	1
s	1	1	5	3
?	1	2	0	1

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