

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



School of Humanities and Communication Arts

# **Effects of Video Feedback Mode on Students' Academic Writing**

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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To Mum, Dad, and Josh



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# Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.



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Michelle Cavaleri

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# Abbreviations

ALL	Academic language and learning
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
ELP	English language proficiency
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
SLS	Student Learning Support
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

# Abstract

Academic writing is a challenge for students undertaking a degree as they encounter new genres in reading and writing, a new academic register, and referencing. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of feedback for developing students' academic writing (e.g., K. Hyland, 2009; Poulos & Mahony, 2008), yet others have shown that feedback is often poor quality or not engaged with by students (Chanock, 2000; Wingate, 2010). Researchers have theorised that the mode of feedback may affect feedback provision and students' engagement with feedback (Crook et al., 2012; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Stannard, 2008); however, there is little empirical research that investigates the effects of feedback mode. To address this research gap, this study examines the effect of two different feedback modes, written mode and audio-visual mode, with particular attention to the focus and form of the feedback, as well as students' revisions in response to the feedback.

A mixed method case study design was employed with a purposeful sample of 20 first-year undergraduate students at an Australian higher education institution. Over the course of a term, each student submitted two draft assignments to an academic skills advisor for feedback. One paper received written feedback and the other paper received screen-capture audio-visual feedback, which incorporates spoken recorded feedback and simultaneous video of the advisor's computer screen. Using grounded theory methods, the analysis involved coding, classifying and organising the advisor's comments (n = 1040) and the students' corresponding revisions into an analytical framework to measure and describe the effects of mode on the provision and uptake of feedback. This inductive approach is in the tradition of feedback researchers such as Ferris (1997, 2006) and Merry and Orsmond (2008), but the current study's framework differs from others as it incorporates a sociocultural theoretical perspective and moves away from viewing comments as corrective feedback in response to language errors only. The student participants were also surveyed and interviewed to gain qualitative data about their perceptions and preferences to help explain the findings of the feedback analysis.



The analysis revealed that 88% of the video comments led students to make a successful revision to their draft compared to 77% of the written comments. Results show further that written feedback was highly directive and largely focused on linguistic accuracy, whereas video feedback was more likely to address content and text structure issues and contain detailed explanations and praise. Most student stated they prefer video feedback because, in their opinion, it is easier to understand, feels more personal and includes explanations about *why* changes are necessary and *how* to improve their work. These findings indicate that the spoken nature of audio-visual feedback can help implement feedback good practice principles, such as those suggested by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Straub (2000), and can also facilitate feedback that aligns with a Vygotskian theoretical orientation (Vygotsky, 1978) to academic language and learning support. The findings also support Mayer's (2009) claim that a multimodal (e.g. audio and visual) approach to learning is more effective than a mono-modal (e.g. only visual) approach. These insights contribute to the growing body of literature on feedback methods and can inform feedback practice in higher education to support students with the development of their academic writing skills.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This study investigates feedback given to undergraduate students on their academic writing. The research focuses on how the mode of feedback, namely written feedback compared with audio-visual feedback, affects the provision and uptake of feedback. This chapter establishes the research context that frames the study and states the aims of the study. It also includes an outline of the research design and the theoretical framework on which the investigation rests. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the study and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

In the current Australian higher education context, significant changes are impacting all aspects of teaching and learning. These changes include increasing diversity of the student population, such as students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, mature-aged students, students who are the first in their family to enroll in a degree, and students coming to tertiary study from a range of non-traditional pathways, as well as a growing number of foreign students coming into Australian universities to pursue their education in English. For many of these students, academic writing presents considerable challenges. Consequently, there is a need to support the growing number of students, both international and domestic, who may not be ready for the required standards of academic literacy (Arkoudis, 2014; Arkoudis & Doughney, 2014). These students can face difficulties in their degree where writing is the key assessment tool and a way to exhibit learning (Lillis, 2001; Wingate, 2010). Writing difficulties can become highly problematic, as “the (in)ability to communicate effectively or to engage with and produce texts can have a profound impact on how students experience university, not to mention on their potential success or failure in their degrees” (Baker, 2013, p. 36).

Therefore, there is a need for higher education institutions to provide sufficient resources for the development of students' academic writing. Most Australian institutions have recognised this need and have incorporated academic literacy development into their strategic plans, policies, and curricula and consider it a core component of teaching and learning (Arkoudis, 2014; Dunworth, 2013). Some common ways that discipline educators and academic language and learning (ALL) advisors support students include embedding literacy development in course design and assessment, facilitating explicit literacy training in class or as an add-on workshop, and consulting with students one-on-one (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009). Within these broad approaches, more specific strategies include incorporating practice activities that scaffold writing, analysing exemplars of good writing, and providing detailed and constructive feedback.

Feedback is, arguably, one of the most powerful influences on student learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In higher education, feedback is powerful as it allows for a level of one-to-one teaching about academic writing that is framed within the context of the student's actual text. This aligns with the conceptualisation of academic writing as a 'scaffolded' activity, whereby educators and ALL advisors support and guide students' academic writing development, particularly in their first year of an undergraduate degree. This approach reflects the Vygotskian theoretical perspective of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978), which posits that "development occurs in highly contextualised activities and in collaboration with a more knowledgeable individual (the expert). For development to occur, the expert needs to provide the learner (the novice) with appropriate assistance, which is then internalised and used by the novice as their own individual resources" (Morton, Storch, & Thompson, 2014, p. A-26). Through this theoretical lens, feedback from educators and ALL advisors can be seen as critical in helping students construct their own understandings about academic writing to improve both their writing skills and their final written products.

However, this positive effect on writing development is only possible if students engage with the feedback comments. As Sadler (1998) points out, feedback can

only truly be considered successful if the 'feedback loop' is completed, that is, it can be detected in the work of students that the feedback has been utilised. It is often assumed that students will engage as much as possible in assessment tasks and apply the feedback from advisors, lecturers, and tutors to achieve the best mark possible. However, many students seem to ignore or fail to understand and internalise written feedback (Dube, 2009; Gillett, Hammond, & Martala, 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009). Therefore, student engagement with feedback and the effectiveness of feedback practices remain prime areas of concern.

Recent studies examining feedback provision to students in higher education indicate that the quality of written feedback may be partly to blame for students' lack of engagement with feedback. Wingate (2010) claims that poor quality feedback is common, and the language of feedback is often incomprehensible to students. Similarly, other studies have shown that students often find feedback difficult to understand, ambiguous and not personalised enough to be useful (Coffin et al., 2005; Crook et al., 2012; Dube, 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009; F. Hyland, 2003; Stannard, 2007). Bennett and Nair's (2011) study also found that feedback is often not detailed enough and does not provide information on *how* to improve. Consequently, feedback is often ignored, misunderstood or misinterpreted (F. Hyland, 1998), or students use feedback without understanding what it implies (Stannard, 2008).

Some researchers suggest that the written mode of providing feedback might be part of the problem, as students may misconstrue written comments and are becoming less comfortable with processing written information (Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008), and there are arguments that technologically-enhanced, multimodal methods are more effective (Cavaleri, Di Biase, & Kawaguchi, 2014; Crook et al., 2012; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Stannard, 2008). One such method is the use of screen-capture technology to create feedback videos. Screen-capture software is a simple technology that records the user's voice and on-screen activity, and the video can be shared instantly via a hyperlink. Several studies have found that students perceive screen-capture video feedback as useful and preferable to written feedback and this feedback method has created

substantial interest in the educational community (Anson, 2015; Brick & Holmes, 2008; Harper, Green, & Fernandez-Toro, 2012; Harper, Green, & Fernandez-Toro, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Stannard, 2007, 2008). However, there is little empirical evidence that shows how this audio-visual mode affects feedback provision or how it impacts on students' revisions throughout the writing process. In addition, there is little research on whether written or audio-visual feedback is more effective for particular groups of learners, such as those with a low or high level of English language proficiency (ELP). These issues, therefore, are the focus of the current study. The aim of this study is to investigate how written and audio-visual mode affects the focus of the feedback (what type of issues are addressed), the form of the feedback (how the feedback is expressed) and students' uptake of the feedback. The goal of the research is to analyse the cases under investigation in this study, to shed some light on which kind of feedback may be more effective and why, as well as identify implications for feedback provision in an educational environment such as the current one, where student needs are diverse and there is a call to embrace new technology to enhance feedback practices. More detail about the study's aims and the full research questions are given in § 2.5 next chapter.

This study uses a mixed method research approach to quantify impacts and explore perceptions. The study examines authentic written and technology-based audio-visual feedback given to 20 undergraduate students at a higher education institution in Sydney. Using grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the analysis examined the nature of the feedback itself as well as the revisions made as a result of the feedback. Each feedback comment and revision was coded, classified and organised into an analytical framework. The student participants also completed a questionnaire which was designed to explore the students' perceptions about each mode of feedback and their feedback preferences. In addition, three participants took part in a semi-structured interview to gain in-depth, individual perspectives on themes that had arisen in the questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire and interviews was to help support and explain the findings of the feedback analysis. Full details of the research design are given in Chapter 3: *Methodology*.

The findings of this study are examined in light of two theoretical perspectives, namely Sociocultural Learning Theory which stems from the work of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978), and the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). According to the first theoretical stance, learning is a social, collaborative activity and development occurs when the 'expert' assists the 'novice' with a task which will ideally lead to better self-regulation (Morton et al., 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). This conceptualisation reflects the kind of activity that occurs when an ALL advisor provides feedback to a student, and this study examines how the mode of feedback can scaffold learning about academic writing. The findings are discussed in relation to a synthesis of feedback good practice principles that strongly reflect sociocultural learning theory (Meyer & Niven, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Race, 2004, 2006; Straub, 2000). The second theoretical approach, the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, posits that the brain is a dual-channel, limited-capacity, active processing system, therefore, information that is presented in multiple modes (for example, visually and aurally) and in ways that minimise unnecessary cognitive load is ideal for meaningful learning (Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). This study explores how screen-capture technology can help students face the cognitive challenge of feedback and revising their work.

It is important to acknowledge several limitations of the research design, some of which were purposely placed on the scope of this study to maintain focus and minimise potential variables. One of the key limitations is the researcher's own participation in the study as the ALL advisor providing feedback to the student participants. While this raises some issues around subjectivity and confidentiality, the study followed the principles of research ethics set out by Western Sydney University. More detail about how the researcher's dual role in this study was managed is provided in § 3.7: *Ethical considerations* and § 3.8: *Reliability and validity considerations*. The second key limitation is that only one advisor participated the study. However, it was important that the feedback was given to all students by the same advisor to minimise variables. A more

detailed discussion of the study's limitations is given in § 8.4: *Limitations of the study*.

This study contributes to knowledge on ways of providing effective feedback to students. Most research on this topic has been developed within the field of second language writing where feedback is commonly viewed as error correction. This study, therefore, has theoretical and practical implications because it examines feedback to both native and non-native English speaking students in the academic advising context, where feedback is not limited to error correction since it also involves scaffolding learning about academic writing and helping students to develop strategies to improve their writing. The study offers a methodological framework for analysing feedback comments and students' revisions that incorporates an academic literacy perspective, thus moving away from regarding feedback as corrective response focusing on language errors.

This research also helps to extend the limited knowledge base in relation to audio-visual feedback methods. Few studies so far have explored recorded video feedback. Investigations have mostly focused on student and staff perceptions. The current study provides objective evidence on the impact of video feedback on students' revisions which supports the reports of positive response from educators and students. Coding, classifying and organising feedback comments and the students' revisions contributes to further understanding of the benefits of audio-visual feedback within educational settings in relation to both sociocultural learning theory and multimodal learning theory.

This research may, therefore, be of interest to administrators at tertiary institutions looking at improving ways to support the writing development of students. This study may also be of interest to educators who want to learn more about the impact of different feedback methods and wish to enhance this aspect of professional interaction with students. This may include academic language and literacy specialists, discipline educators, and English for Academic Purposes teachers.

Finally, and most importantly, it is intended that this research will have a positive impact on students' performance by providing insight into the kind of feedback that is most effective for improving writing. The ability to produce well-written academic texts impacts on how students experience tertiary study and is a key to students' success in their degrees (Borg & Deane, 2011).

Feedback that leads to improvements in a student's writing increases the likelihood of passing assessment tasks and successfully completing subjects. This is crucial to students given the financial and emotional consequences of failing and repeating a subject.

This chapter aimed to provide background to this study in the context of the higher education system in Australia, explain the study's purpose and offer an overview of the research design. In what follows, Chapter 2 reviews the current literature on writing in higher education, the role and impact of feedback, and technology-enhanced feedback provision. Literature pertaining to feedback research methodology is also reviewed. Chapter 3 explains the methodology underlying this investigation, including a description of the participants and the data collection and analysis methods. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of the feedback analyses, questionnaire, and interviews and provide an interpretation of the results and discussion of key themes. Finally, the answers to the research questions, the implications of the research findings, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are considered in Chapter 8.



# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided the rationale for investigating the impact of different modes of feedback, described how this study will contribute to the limited literature on feedback mode, and explained the significance of this study for higher education institutions, educators, and students. This chapter provides a critical review of current literature pertaining to academic writing and feedback. The first part of this chapter presents an overview of writing in higher education, focusing on the importance of English language proficiency, the characteristics of academic writing, and the role of academic language and learning departments. The second part presents an analysis of the role of feedback and its interconnectedness with academic writing development. It also outlines the challenges of providing effective feedback and discusses the theoretical orientation that underpins feedback provision in ALL support. The third part evaluates the relative merits and drawbacks of different feedback modes and offers a comprehensive review of empirical research on written, audio and video feedback. It also proposes that the findings regarding the differences in feedback mode can be attributed to the differences between writing and speech. The final section of this chapter highlights the gaps in the literature and states the goals of the current study and the research questions.

### 2.2 Writing in higher education

Student writing is at the heart of teaching and learning in higher education in Australia. Even when writing improvement is not explicitly stated as an objective of a course or unit, writing is fundamental to most teaching and learning activities (Borg & Deane, 2011; K. Hyland, 2013b). Writing can fulfill a number of purposes; for example, it may be used as assessment, as an aid to

learning and understanding, as way to socialise students into disciplinary communities, and as a way to improve the communication skills of students as future professionals (Coffin et al., 2005; K. Hyland, 2013b).

In most degrees, written assignments are a key assessment tool, as they are a way for students to consolidate and display their learning and subsequently progress through their studies (Lillis, 2001; Wingate, 2010). Students are required to produce texts such as essays, laboratory reports and research proposals in order to demonstrate their understanding of disciplinary course content (Coffin et al., 2005; K. Hyland, 2013b). In assessing written assignments, educators may focus on both the content and the form of the writing; that is, the language used, the text structure, the development of argument, grammar, spelling and punctuation (Coffin et al., 2005).

Writing can also help students learn and digest disciplinary content. Lavelle (2009) argues that writing can help students remember facts and concepts and develop reasoning and critical thinking skills, as well as provide a “cognitive map” that can be revised and reassembled (p. 415). In addition, students may be asked to write texts that reflect on the learning process itself, such as learning journals, where they record thoughts, questions, problems, and ideas about readings, class topics, and applied practice, which may or may not be linked to assessment (Coffin et al., 2005).

Writing in higher education is also viewed as a form of social behavior and a way to enter disciplinary communities. As students progress with their studies, they are expected to produce texts that demonstrate the norms and conventions of their chosen disciplines (Coffin et al., 2005). There is a socialisation process that occurs as a student ‘learns’ academic discourse, and academic writing, therefore, is regarded a “key acculturation practice” in higher education (K. Hyland, 2009, p. 132). Appropriate deployment of academic discourse “marks membership of the appropriate discourse community” (Clerehan & Moore, 1995, p. 72) and shows cultural understanding of how knowledge is constructed and transmitted within the institution and the discipline (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2012; Coffin et al., 2005). Gourlay (2009)

also argues that a student's sense of identity and legitimacy are affirmed as they became more familiar with the academic literacy practices required of them.

Finally, good writing is also seen as a necessity for the professional field in which students will eventually enter, and solid writing skills give prospective employers an indication of the capabilities of a student (Borg & Deane, 2011). University faculty interviewed in Zhu's (2004) study highlighted the role of writing as an important communication tool for professionals "in the real world" (p. 34). They also stated that written communication skills were at the top of the list of skills prospective employers desire, and this was one reason for emphasising writing in the curriculum and course work.

However, despite its obvious importance, writing is perhaps the most challenging academic task that students face. According to Lavelle (2009) "writing imposes tremendous constraints on working memory involving a full range of demands: intentionality, theme, genre, paragraph, sentence, and lexical and grammar dimensions" (p. 415), and writers need to continuously monitor and switch focus from macro-level concerns such as logic of argument and voice as well as sentence-level concerns such as grammar and punctuation. Fowler (1999) and Cook (2001) agree, stating that writers must be skilled at negotiating a number of constraints including conceptual, sociocultural and metacognitive knowledge. Another type of writing knowledge that both Fowler (1999) and Elton (2010) describe is tacit knowledge, that is, knowledge that operates outside of a person's conscious awareness, such as the rules of grammar which are learned during early childhood and "used throughout life with little, if any, conscious understanding" (Fowler, 1999, p. 49).

For students entering university, the challenge of negotiating these writing demands is compounded by the fact that they are writing in a new context about new topics to a new audience. Students are expected to conform to academic writing norms and conventions, yet are often confused about exactly what it means to write "academically" (Donohue & Erling, 2012). Although students are aware that certain literacy practices are required of them, they often do not fully understand the rules and processes of these practices and

have difficulty articulating exactly what those practices might be (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2012; Carless, 2006).

It could be argued that secondary schooling should prepare students for writing in higher education. However, when comparing high school assignments with undergraduate assignments, several key differences stand out regarding approach and methodology. First, undergraduate assignments are generally much longer than those required of high school students. In addition, undergraduate students must provide evidence to support their views and assertions and reference sources appropriately, whereas high school assignments often do not require students to do so. Many high school assignments focus on a narrative style of writing or ask students to comment on how they feel about something (Lavelle, 2009), whereas, generally speaking, university assignments require students to produce expository texts with the goal of explanation or persuasion (Zwaan & Rapp, 2006). These assignments aim to develop students' ability to analyse data, apply research and theory, and draw conclusions. Finally, undergraduate assignments also place emphasis on document formatting, but this is generally not a high priority with secondary school writing. Hence, secondary school writing instruction does not necessarily prepare students for all of the writing demands in an undergraduate degree. Therefore, many students face difficulties with their first-year writing assignments, and the transition from high school to tertiary education is seen as a "threshold" in writing (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015; Brockman, Taylor, Crawford, & Kreth, 2010; Gurlay, 2009).

For other students, writing difficulties stem from their level of general English language proficiency (ELP). As discussed, academic writing requires students to have specific knowledge about disciplinary thought and communication processes. However, general language competence underlies these abilities. In other words, academic writing can be conceptualised as a layered model, with the disciplinary thought and communication processes built on a foundation of well-developed general writing skills. This view implies that the difficulties some students experience when writing academic texts may be attributed to insufficient general language proficiency, and this applies to native English

speakers as well as students from a non-English speaking background. This is highly problematic, as Bharuthram and McKenna's (2012) findings indicate that without a basic level of language competence, "the student's chance of simultaneously acquiring the requisite academic literacies is nigh impossible" (p. 585).

Over the last five years, a consensus in the Australian ELP literature has emerged in favour of a broader definition of ELP that incorporates academic literacies and professional communication skills (Murray, 2010, 2013; Murray & Hicks, 2014). Australia's Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency defines ELP as the following:

*English language proficiency (ELP) refers to language proficiency (the ability to communicate in the English language) and academic language proficiency (the ability to participate in a course of study delivered in English and to achieve expected learning outcomes without requiring significant English language support, and gain entry into the labour market or a further course of study.) (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, 2013, p. 7)*

Put simply, ELP is the ability of a student to meet the literacy demands of their course successfully. However, while it is widely recognised that a student needs a certain level of ELP to be successful in their course, proof of ELP level is not an entry requirement for all students. The next section discusses this complex phenomenon and its implications.

### **2.2.1 English language proficiency requirements**

The number of students who face difficulties with academic writing due to their level of ELP may be partly attributed to the ELP entry requirements for students. International students seeking admission into Australian universities and colleges need proof of achievement in particular English tests, such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). These tests define ELP in relation to test scores and describe the performance of an individual who scores within a particular

range (Oliver, Vanderford, & Grote, 2012). In general, an overall score IELTS between 6.0 and 7.0 in the academic module is considered an acceptable level of ELP for most degrees in Australia (O'Loughlin, 2008). A person attaining a band score of 6.0 is described as a “competent user” and one who “has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations [and] can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar contexts” (IELTS, 2015, p. 6). In addition to standardised ELP tests, some institutions accept other forms of evidence, such as the completion of English-medium courses or previous attendance at an English-speaking educational institution (Oliver et al., 2012). However, despite these requirements, educators have expressed concern about the English language abilities of some international students (O'Loughlin, 2008) and there is evidence that the limited English language competency among international students is an obstacle to their success (Oliver et al., 2012).

The abovementioned entry requirements only apply to international students and recent immigrants, and there are usually no ELP entry requirements for domestic students. Most students qualify for entry into a Bachelor degree by having completed the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or articulating from vocational education and training (VET). However, it cannot be assumed that successful completion of the HSC or a VET course is evidence that a matriculating student has sufficient language proficiency for an undergraduate degree (Read & Von Randow, 2013). In addition, university enrolment records show that an increasing number of domestic students are from a non-English speaking background (Oliver et al., 2012). However, because they are classified as domestic students, they are not required to provide evidence of ELP on entry as they may have, for example, migrated to Australia and completed their secondary schooling and HSC here. Therefore, irrespective of the English language entry requirements of a university or college, a considerable portion of students will require language development throughout their degree in order to be successful in their course (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009).

The necessity to develop students' ELP is well recognised by higher education institutions in Australia. This recognition may be attributed to the release of the

*Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities* published by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (2009). While this document was originally intended to apply to international students, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (2009) acknowledge that the principles “can be applied more generally to learning and teaching of all higher education students” (p. 1). The document notes the language skills of many students are inadequate for tertiary study, and one of the document’s key themes is that institutions are responsible for supporting students to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments. In response to this, many Australian universities and colleges are now ensuring that writing and English language development is a visible and core part of a student’s learning experience (Arkoudis, 2014; Dunworth, 2013). It is no longer assumed that students will simply ‘pick up’ how to write as part of learning their subject knowledge; instead, there is a trend to teach the rules and conventions of academic writing more explicitly. The next section discusses the characteristics associated with academic writing and explores the nature of the language and writing problems that students typically face.

### **2.2.2 The nature of academic writing**

In the context of academic writing, what makes a piece of student writing ‘good’ can be difficult to pinpoint and varies greatly within and across disciplines and educational settings. However, there is some consensus in the literature regarding key characteristics of good academic writing style. These characteristics include effective text-level organisation, use of source material, the logical development of ideas, the use of academic register including discipline-specific terminology and referencing conventions, complex sentence construction, and accurate grammar and punctuation (Bonanno & Jones, 2007; Brockman et al., 2010; K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Paltridge et al., 2009; Zhu, 2004). In this section, these key features of academic texts and common problems students face will be explored, moving from ‘global’ whole-text level concerns to ‘local’ language-level issues.

At the whole-text level, a student is expected to write in a genre that is appropriate to the text. Genre is closely linked to a text's rhetorical purpose and overt communicative purpose. For example, the purpose of a laboratory report is to give an account of an experiment while the purpose of a case study is usually to identify key issues and make recommendations (Coffin et al., 2005). These purposes will, therefore, affect the organisational structure and language of the text, so it is important that students are aware of the rhetorical purpose of each text they write. However, research shows that structural and textual features of genres vary both within and across academic disciplines (Brockman et al., 2010; Coffin et al., 2005; K. Hyland, 2009). As Coffin et al. (2005) point out, terms such as 'essay', 'laboratory report' and 'case study' are problematic as they can each represent a wide variety of text types. For example, an essay may contain different elements depending on whether it is framed as a critical review, a discussion, a personal reflection or an exposition (Coffin et al., 2005). Knowing how to frame a text is usually embedded in the wording of the assignment task itself; these include instruction words such as 'discuss', 'critically evaluate', 'compare and contrast'. However, students may not have this understanding and respond to the descriptive term applied to the text rather than the function the text is required to perform (Coffin et al., 2005). Consequently, these students will fail to organise their text appropriately for its purpose, whereas a stronger writer will draw on diverse schemata for structuring texts for different purposes and organise ideas according to conventional structures (Fowler, 1999).

Use of source material to achieve rhetorical purpose is another distinguishing feature of academic writing. The ability to integrate one's own ideas with the ideas of others from various sources is the key to knowledge construction in academic writing (Hendricks & Quinn, 2000). In most cases, written assignments require students to synthesise existing research, literature and evidence to support claims or points of view; however, students may not understand this, particularly if in high school and other previous studies they used resources and notes prepared by teachers (Coffin et al., 2005). Chanock's (2007) research revealed that problems with referencing, or a lack thereof, is



often due to the fact that students are worried that it “looks like I didn’t have any ideas of my own”, and, as Chanock (2007) explains, “they do not realise that their ideas are supposed to be about other scholars’ ideas, which means that they cannot express their own ideas without referring to sources” (p. A-6). Moreover, the idea of voice, critical thinking and textual ownership may be less familiar or even foreign to students from particular cultural backgrounds. For example, Shi (2011) highlights that there are different cultural interpretations of plagiarism by students who speak English as a second language, and many students have misconceptions related to how they understand common knowledge, knowledge learnt in the past, or background materials. More generally, students often have trouble synthesising ideas taken from sources and jump from one idea to another without using those materials to support a line of argument they are proposing. Some students also have difficulty paraphrasing and present “patch writing” where others’ words and ideas are pieced together poorly (Shi, 2011).

A key feature at the text, paragraph and sentence level is the use of what Halliday and Hasan (1976) refer to as ‘cohesive ties’. This term describes language that links ideas and illustrates the connection between different parts of a text, which is critical for coherence and helps the reader navigate the text’s structure (Coffin et al., 2005; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Zwaan & Rapp, 2006). Cohesive ties include connectives such as *therefore*, *and then*, *but*, and *however*, pronoun referents, and synonyms (Zwaan & Rapp, 2006). In addition to lexical cues, there are also syntactic and structural cues. For example, the first sentence of a paragraph conventionally conveys the paragraph’s main idea and may also show the link between the idea and the rest of the text. Students usually need to learn how to use these types of cohesive devices and are often taught that during the later stages of writing, they should add “transitional words and phrases that help guide the reader from one section to another; sentences that recap the main idea of the preceding section, or words that signal agreement, extension, qualification, or objections to previously stated ideas” (Coffin et al., 2005, p. 24). However, students may have difficulties with accuracy when using cohesive devices, such as with misleading or ambiguous

use of pronouns, as well as with unfamiliar connectives, and/or minimal use of connectives (Hudson, 2009; Myhill, 2009).

Academic register is another key characteristic of academic writing. Register refers to a range of linguistic aspects that relate to the contexts in which writers write (Coffin et al., 2005). Among others, typical features of academic register include:

- use of specialised, elevated or abstract vocabulary (Coffin et al., 2005);
- a highly nominal style (that is, greater use of nouns than verbs) (Baratta, 2010; Coffin et al., 2005);
- the avoidance of the personal voice (*I, you*) by using passive voice and other impersonal constructions where the subjects or agents of clauses are backgrounded (Baratta, 2009; Coffin et al., 2005);
- use of hedges (that is, use of words such as *may, might, must, need to, it seems that, possibly, probably* to modify statements) (Coffin et al., 2005);
- referencing conventions (Coffin et al., 2005; Shi, 2011).

A common feature of 'weaker' student texts is that they tend to be written in an overly personal and anecdotal style incongruent with academic register. Myhill (2009) argues that one key feature for distinguishing 'good' from 'weak' writing is that a student is able to "express ideas and thoughts in writing in ways which do not simply mirror spoken patterns" (pp. 11-12), and a useful way to explain the concept of register to students is to highlight the differences between informal speech and formal writing (Coffin et al., 2005). It is important to note that a personal, subjective style of writing may be permissible or even required for certain assignment tasks, such as a reflective essay or learning journal. It is also important to note that other characteristics of academic writing have also recently been challenged. For example, it is now common to see the use of first person in peer-reviewed journal articles, and there are opposing views about whether students need to always strive for a high frequency of nominalisations within their academic writing (Baratta, 2010).

Finally, linguistic accuracy is key to quality academic writing as it helps the writer express ideas clearly, accurately and precisely. Academic texts are expected to follow recognised English spelling, punctuation and grammar conventions, such as accurate sentence structure, correct subject-verb agreement, consistent and appropriate tense, and correct use of articles. However, many undergraduate students are still on a trajectory of development in terms of their writing and their linguistic choices may not always be accurate or successful choices (Myhill, 2009). At the sentence level, students may have difficulties with structures that are difficult to segment, such as constructions without function words or with ambiguous function words, as well as with structures that place a heavy burden on short-term memory, such as a sentence with a dependent clause or long subject-noun phrase (Hudson, 2009). Coffin et al. (2005) state that common grammatical errors in student writing also include not putting a main verb in each sentence, lack of pronoun agreement in sentences, unclear use of pronouns, and inconsistent use of tenses, as well as problems with apostrophe usage. Myhill (2009) states that characteristics of more limited linguistic development include overdependence on coordination, difficulty managing ideas over long sentences, and lapses in coherence. Students from a non-English speaking background often have significant difficulties with some aspects of English grammar that are distinct from the problems that native English speakers have. These include the use of articles (*a, the*), word order, word formation, selection of prepositions (*on, at, in*, etc.), omission of the relative pronoun and omission of plural “s” (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005).

As well as conforming to grammar conventions, expressing ideas in ways that are more linguistically mature distinguishes ‘good’ writing from ‘poor’ writing in an academic context. More mature writing is characterised by an increase in lexical diversity, greater use of the passive, and an increasing ability to use an alternative to the personal pronoun in the subject position (Myhill, 2009). In addition, more mature writing will begin to show sophistication and density of vocabulary, as well as an increase in nouns (‘nouniness’) and nominalisation (Hudson, 2009). Growth in writing is also signaled by increases in the mean

length of a main clause and its modifiers, as well as a trend to move from coordination to subordination (the use of subordinate clauses) (Hudson, 2009; Myhill, 2009). This growth is reflected as students come to produce writing that is “more fully developed, more coherent, and more surely articulated”, “[infused] with more authority,” and “convey[ing] more of a sense of personal assurance and of purpose in communicating with readers” (Herrington & Curtis, 2000, p. 357).

It should be noted that characteristics of ‘good’ academic writing vary by discipline (Brockman et al., 2010; K. Hyland, 2013b; Wingate, 2012). Brockman et al. (2010) surveyed faculty from various disciplines at an American university and found that while there were common characteristics educators associated with good student writing, there were differences between humanities and non-humanities faculty. For example, they found that “humanities faculty reported valuing first-person perspective, personal experience as evidence, and longer paragraphs, as well as active voice and contractions; in contrast, non-humanities faculty reported valuing third-person perspective, shorter paragraphs, and technical jargon, as well as passive voice and no contractions.” (Brockman et al., 2010, p. 43). Therefore, academic writing is not a simply a blanket ‘set of rules’ for writing, but instead a range of more complex, discipline-specific academic practices.

### **2.2.3 Writing support for students**

The abovementioned writing issues highlight the need for higher education institutions to help students develop their writing skills. In fact, this study is based on the premise that institutions have an obligation to provide assistance with students’ writing and English language development, as outlined in the *Good Practice Principles* (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009). Different approaches to supporting students exist in Australia; however, academic language and learning (ALL) staff are typically charged with the role of assisting students to develop their writing and other academic skills (Arkoudis et al., 2014; Jones, 2004). In most cases, ALL staff work within an

academic support department or learning centre. According to Jones (2004), these learning centres:

are diverse in their location within the institution, the conditions of employment of their staff, their status and the type of work they perform. In the last few years, however, there has been a shift from a 'marginalized' perception of these units to a more empowered view of their role and academic standing within the institution. Moreover, ... a meaningful approach to teaching and writing in a learning center can be one which offers students in any discipline an insight into the purposes and contexts of their own writing (p. 255).

ALL staff exist in each of the 39 universities in Australia (Barthel, 2013) as well as within most of the specialist colleges that also offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. In the 39 universities alone, it is estimated that there are approximately 500 full-time/permanent ALL staff, and the vast majority of ALL centres also employ casual/sessional ALL staff (Barthel, 2013). ALL staff support over 1.2 million students, of which 25% come from overseas (DEEWR, 2010, as cited in Barthel, 2013) and the number of international students in Australian universities continues to increase; for example, the University of Melbourne report that in some courses, non-native speakers of English make up almost 50% of the total enrolments (Storch & Hill, 2008).

The aim of ALL staff is to provide academic skills support for students. This can be provided through a variety of means, for example, by embedding language and literacy development in course design and assessment, explicit literacy training in class or as an add on workshop, or one-on-one consultations provided by academic language and learning experts (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009). While there is some discussion about the value and efficacy of one-on-one consultations (Huijser, Kimmins, & Galligan, 2008; O'Mahony, Verezub, Dalrymple, & Bertone, 2013; Wilson, Collins, Couchman, & Li, 2011) and reports that some institutions are scaling them back (Harris & Ashton, 2011), there remains support for the significant role that they play in students' learning (Borg & Deane, 2011; Chanock, 2007; Huijser et al., 2008;

Wilson et al., 2011). One of the main arguments in favour of one-on-one consultations is that they focus on the individual needs of the student (Stevenson & Kokkinn, 2009; Wilson et al., 2011). Recent figures show that individual student consultations were the most commonly reported ALL activity in Australian universities (Barthel, 2013), and take place face-to-face, online (such as via Skype or Zoom), over the phone, or over email.

The consultations often involve assisting students at certain stages of preparing a written assignment. Writing an assignment usually involves taking a process approach to writing, which is based on the premise that writing is an iterative process, as shown in Figure 1. A key part of the process writing approach is the importance of seeking and responding to the feedback of others while a text is under development, so often students will book a consultation with an ALL advisor to seek formative feedback on a draft. Indeed, providing feedback during this cycle is a core activity for ALL advisors (Chanock, 2007; Habel, 2009). Feedback on students' drafts may take the form of oral or written comments and is designed to scaffold students' understanding of text forms and composing processes, as well as guide students in their revisions.

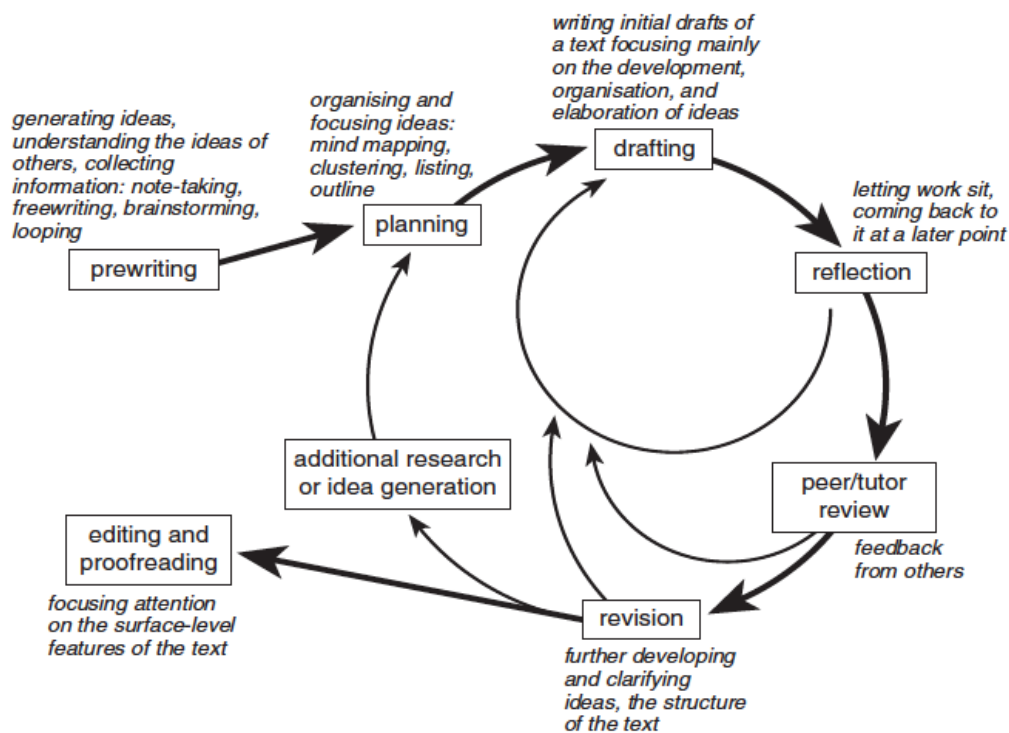


Figure 1. The process writing approach (Coffin et al., 2005)

The next section of this literature review provides a discussion about the importance of feedback and the challenges of providing effective feedback. It will also analyse the role of feedback in ALL support and in developing students' academic writing, and discuss the theory that underpins feedback provision in ALL support and other contexts.

## **2.3 Feedback on writing**

### **2.3.1 *The importance of feedback***

It is widely accepted that feedback is not only the most important part of the assessment process, but is also an essential component in the learning cycle in higher education (Foster, McNeil, & Lawther, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; K. Hyland, 2013a; Nicol, 2010a; Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010; Weaver, 2006). Feedback allows for reflection and development (Weaver, 2006) and helps students develop their approaches to studying and writing in their degree (Foster et al., 2013). Feedback is typically highly valued by students (K. Hyland, 2013a; Weaver, 2006) and plays an important role in motivating and encouraging students (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997). Feedback also allows for a level of one-to-one teaching about writing and individualised attention that is often not possible in a class or workshop (Ferris et al., 1997).

Feedback is particularly important for students in the early stages of their degree. According to Foster et al. (2013), early encounters with assessment and feedback highly influence a student's engagement with the rest of their studies. Feedback can inform students of their educators' beliefs about their subject, about learning, and about the value of literacy in their discipline (K. Hyland, 2013a). In addition, feedback helps first-year students understand their new learning environment as they adjust from high school or vocational studies to higher education (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014). Students entering a degree must write at a new level and often in different ways from previous studies, and support in the form of feedback can help students make the transition to academic writing (Borg & Deane, 2011).

Formative feedback can be a particularly powerful type of feedback. Formative feedback provides students with guidance about ways to improve their work, as opposed to summative feedback which informs students about how well they have achieved the required standard (Sadler, 1989). Formative feedback may include provisional feedback on a draft, which students then have the opportunity to improve before final submission. It is highly likely, then, that students will pay attention to this kind of feedback because addressing it is likely to influence their mark (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). In sum, feedback, and in particular formative feedback, is a vital resource for students to help develop and improve their writing skills.

### ***2.3.2 Challenges of providing effective feedback***

While feedback has an important role to play in the development of students' writing, this positive effect on learning is only possible if students engage with the feedback comments. One of the most influential scholars in the area of formative feedback, Sadler (1989, 1998), argues that feedback can only truly be considered successful if the 'feedback loop' is completed; that is, it can be detected in the work of students that the feedback provided has made a difference to what students do. Although students value feedback from teachers (K. Hyland, 2013a; Weaver, 2006), they often seem to ignore or fail to understand and internalise feedback (Dube, 2009; Gillett et al., 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009). Therefore, how to provide effective, high quality feedback that students engage with remains an important issue in higher education today.

In the literature pertaining to higher education more generally, a number of authors have identified areas of concern about providing feedback to students including timeliness (Bennett & Nair, 2011; Crook et al., 2012), efficiency (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011), and quality (Wingate, 2010). This issue of quality is of particular importance for ALL advisors due to the often "one shot" nature of an individual consultation, as opposed to a student receiving feedback from their lecturer or tutor several times over the course of a semester. Wingate (2010) identified that poor quality feedback in higher education was common, and the language of feedback is often incomprehensible to students.



Similarly, many other studies have shown that students often find feedback difficult to understand, ambiguous, too general or vague, and not personalised enough to be useful (Chanock, 2000; Coffin et al., 2005; Crook et al., 2012; Dube, 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009; F. Hyland, 2003; Jonsson, 2013; Nicol, 2010a; Panahi, Birjandi, & Azabdaftari, 2013; Stannard, 2007; Weaver, 2006). At times, handwritten written feedback is simply illegible (Bennett & Nair, 2011; Carless, 2006). Both Weaver (2006) and Bennett and Nair (2011) also found that feedback is often not detailed enough and does not provide information on *how* to improve, which means that students do not have the necessary information to help them 'close the gap' (Sadler, 1989). Consequently, feedback is often ignored, misunderstood or misinterpreted (F. Hyland, 1998), or students use feedback without understanding what it implies and what they actually should correct or improve (Stannard, 2008).

A further area of concern is the lack of student engagement with the feedback even when good quality feedback is provided. Candlin and Plum (1999) note, "it may be the case that 'good' revision and 'good' feedback can only really be defined with reference to the individual writers, their problems, and their reasons for writing." (p. 275). However, individual differences that impact on students' use of feedback have received less attention by researchers. Some research has suggested that a student's level of language proficiency may affect feedback as well as the understanding and uptake of feedback. For example, F. Hyland (1998) conducted a case study investigating the uptake of feedback by two university students from a non-English speaking background, one with high English language proficiency and one with low English language proficiency. She hypothesised that the more proficient student would take more responsibility for revising their paper and would not rely on the teacher's feedback as much as the student with lower proficiency. However, she found that 82% of the stronger student's revisions were initiated from the teacher's feedback, whereas only 22% of the weaker student's revisions could be related to the teacher's feedback. Hyland concluded that when the weaker student was shown problems with the ideas or language of her texts, she often abandoned some of the text and rewrote rather than revised her writing. This is

problematic as the student bypasses an important step in the revision process: diagnosing the nature of the problems in the original text (Hyland, 1998).

Carless (2006) suggests that differences in uptake of feedback between stronger and weaker students could also be attributed to affective factors. He argues that stronger students are more receptive to feedback “because of their greater confidence and better understanding of what good performance entails” (p. 230). On the other hand, feedback to weaker students “carries more risk of being discouraging and/or misunderstood” (p. 230). Affective factors have also been discussed in the feedback literature with regards to students more generally. For example, Handley, Price, and Millar (2011) argue that a student’s emotional state can affect his or her readiness to process, engage with, and act on feedback. A systematic review of feedback literature conducted by Winstone, Nash, Parker, and Rowntree (2017) found plenty of evidence that nuanced feedback that is motivational, sensitive and expressed with a positive tone is more likely to be engaged with. Therefore, feedback that does not impact negatively on a student’s emotions or self-esteem could be a key factor in ensuring feedback is understood and utilised.

Related to this point is that the focus of the feedback needs to be responsive to the stage of the individual student’s language and literacy development. This psycholinguistic perspective involves considering the cognitive processes that enable a person to acquire, use and understand language. One key theory in the area of second language acquisition is that certain linguistic forms can only be learned when the learner is psycholinguistically ready (Pienemann, 1989). In other words, the extent to which grammatical instruction is effective depends on whether a structure is ‘learnable’ for an individual learner (Pienemann, 1987, 1989). This point is illustrated in a study conducted by S. Jones, Myhill, and Bailey (2013) who evaluated contextualised grammar instruction in high schools and found that it particularly benefitted more able writers in their study. They concluded that this was because the intervention was better matched to the stronger students’ learning needs, and that for some students “the level of conceptual thinking required to understand grammatical concepts and transfer that learning into their writing was too high a cognitive challenge”

(S. Jones et al., 2013, p. 1256). Similarly, feedback also needs to be delivered in a form that sits within the individual student's developmental level. Shrestha and Coffin's (2012) study found that teachers did tailor their feedback based on each student's developmental level, for example, by moving from implicit to more explicit feedback for weaker students. However, this may not always be the case, and hence, a student with low ELP who displays difficulties with language constructions such as subject nominal clauses, long subject-noun phrases, and structures that place a heavy burden on short-term memory may be unable to understand teachers' comments that contain the same kind of features, let alone successfully revise such errors in their own writing.

At the other end of the scale, a student with a high level of language proficiency may also have difficulty implementing feedback if it is not pitched correctly. An educator may provide feedback in a more indirect manner, assuming that the student would understand the implied meaning due to their higher level of ELP; however, this may not be the case. In addition, the student may receive feedback that is focused on more abstract and discourse-level features such as coherence and cohesion issues and have trouble implementing the feedback as these are complex issues to resolve (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997). In sum, a student's level of ELP, whether at a high or low level, may affect the delivery of feedback comments as well as the degree to which feedback is taken up. Therefore, there is a "need to be responsive to the academic development needs of the individual student/learner and adapt what we do and how we do it to that particular person" (Berry et al., 2012, p. A-21).

Thus, there are continuing challenges surrounding the delivery of effective feedback in higher education. Many of these challenges relate to two aspects of providing feedback: the "what" and the "how". The "what" refers to the focus of feedback, that is, what issues are addressed and prioritised. The "how" refers to the form of the feedback, that is, how the feedback is expressed. Empirical research has been conducted on the focus and form of feedback in the field of second language writing, but systematic empirical research in an academic advising context in higher education is scarce. A review of the research on the

focus and form of feedback and the debates about different approaches to each are discussed in the following section.

### **2.3.3 *The focus of feedback***

An ALL advisor's feedback typically focuses on a student's general writing skills, academic writing skills and the strengths and weaknesses of the task at hand. Therefore, feedback is likely to focus on a range of rhetorical, structural, lexical and grammatical issues. Researchers have explored the focus of feedback by examining the type of errors or issues commented on when giving feedback, and offered suggestions about what should be addressed and prioritised.

Several researchers have offered frameworks for categorising the types of issues that feedback comments may address. For example, Woodward-Kron (2004) proposed an analytical framework based on Halliday's (1979) modes of meaning that categorised comments to undergraduate students as responding to 'experiential', 'interpersonal' or 'textual' issues. Coffin et al. (2005) suggest that there are five focus area categories of comments on academic writing: content, text structure, rhetorical purpose, register and linguistic accuracy. Both Coffin et al. and Woodward-Kron's models are deductive as they are based on theories and ideas about writing and feedback. Other researchers have created frameworks on the focus of feedback that are inductive and grounded in empirical data. For example, Ferris (2006) examined feedback given to English language learners and developed a schema that categorises feedback according to the linguistic error it addresses, namely verb errors, noun errors, article errors, lexical errors and sentence errors. Going beyond a linguistic-only focus in a study examining feedback to online language learners, F. Hyland (2001) identified four categories relating to feedback focus: content, organisation, language accuracy and presentation. Crisp's (2007) study reviewed feedback given to undergraduate social work students on their essays. The areas in which problems were identified were accuracy, relevance and coverage of the topic, clarity and structure, integration of theory and practice, critical analysis and reflection, evidence of reading, referencing and presentation.

The categories identified by the abovementioned studies are all important focus areas for feedback as they are key to quality academic writing (as discussed in § 2.2.2). However, discerning what focus areas to prioritise can be difficult. Straub (2000) recommends that teachers prioritise feedback on global issues such as content, organisation and purpose before concentrating on style and correctness. He argues that students need to know that their content is most important and to “dramatize the presence of a reader and let them know that their content was going to be read – and read closely – for what it had to say and how well it was said, not simply whether it was said clearly and correctly” (p. 35). On the other hand, Goldstein (2004) argues that for teachers of English language learners, “there are no hard and fast rules about what to comment on in any one draft - no proviso that says main ideas and coherence first, organisation second, development third, and so on” (p. 73). Deciding what to focus on may also depend on what students expect. In some settings, such as when dealing with English language learners, students may expect directive comments on their grammar and lexical choices and often feel that this is the teacher’s primary responsibility when giving feedback (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). On the other hand, higher education students in studies by P. Ferguson (2011) and Winstone, Nash, Rowntree, and Menezes (2016) reported that feedback that focused on referencing, grammar and spelling was less important than other feedback and considered it a ‘luxury’. Interestingly, Winstone et al. (2016) also found that students perceived feedback on their understanding of the topic as less important. The authors surmised that this might be because students prefer comments that focus on skill development as they are more transferable to subsequent work than comments that are specific to the paper or topic.

There is also debate about whether feedback on grammar is useful at all. Truscott (1996) argued that feedback to English language learners that involves explicit grammar correction should be abandoned altogether as there is little evidence to show that it is helpful, and it can actually be harmful. Another argument is that grammar can be unconsciously absorbed and acquired largely from exposure rather than instruction (Krashen, 1981), but there is no clear

evidence to support this (Hancock, 2009). On the other hand, there is an abundance of literature on the benefits of feedback on grammar in both second language writing research (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 1997, 2006, 2011; Ferris et al., 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; F. Hyland, 1998, 2003; F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001; K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 1990) and first language writing research (Bryant, Devine, Ledward, & Nunes, 1997; Hancock, 2009; Hudson, 2009; S. Jones et al., 2013). Even when a stronger student writer avoids any serious grammatical errors, they may not display enough syntactic maturity to satisfy academic audiences. Therefore, feedback on grammar may aim to enhance writing as opposed to correct mistakes. In sum, students need to show both competence and skill with grammar in their academic writing, and, as highlighted by the aforementioned studies, feedback on grammar can be highly beneficial.

Other studies that examine the focus of feedback have shown that the type of problem or issue commented on is related to how successful the students' revisions are. For example, if students expect comments on their grammar and lexical choices, then they may be more likely to take up feedback comments that are related to these issues from an 'expert' in this area (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). On the other hand, a student may choose to reject teacher feedback that disagrees with his or her own beliefs about language conventions or if they feel that the change may alter their intended meaning (Ferris, 1997; K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Other studies indicate that some writing problems are inherently more difficult to revise than others. In their study with English language learners, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) discovered that while most problem types were revised successfully 90% of the time, comments focused on content and development were revised successfully a little more than half of the time, and feedback relating to argumentation, explanation and analysis were revised successfully only 10% of the time. Similarly, Ferris (1997) found that students' revisions focusing on logic and argumentation were less successful than revisions focusing on other issues.

Nevertheless, the focus of the feedback is only one component of providing feedback. The other key component of feedback is its form, and research has

been conducted on exploring the different forms of feedback and their effectiveness in terms of students uptake. This area of research is discussed in the following section.

#### **2.3.4 The form of feedback**

The form of the feedback refers to the pragmatic intent and syntactic form of the comment, or, put more simply, how feedback is expressed. Again, research in this area seems to be predominantly situated within the field of second language writing, although there is some discussion about different forms of feedback in the literature on academic writing.

In the field of second language writing, two general forms of feedback on grammar errors have been researched extensively: direct feedback and indirect feedback. Although the terms have slightly varying definitions in the literature, direct feedback generally refers to instances where the teacher provides the correct linguistic form or structure (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). This may include “the crossing out of an unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme, the insertion of a missing word/phrase/morpheme, or the provision of the correct form or structure” (Bitchener, 2008, p. 105). Indirect feedback refers to when the teacher indicates in some way that an error exists but does not provide an explicit correction, and students are left to resolve fix the problem that has been drawn to their attention (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

A review of studies on the effectiveness of direct versus indirect written feedback on grammatical accuracy in writing reveals that the results are inconclusive. On the one hand, there is an argument that indirect feedback promotes ‘noticing’ (Schmidt, 1990) and requires learners to use problem-solving skills, which consequently promotes deeper learning and understanding about language that is more likely to lead to long-term linguistic improvement and accuracy in writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; James, 1998). This is because indirect feedback encourages learners to engage in ‘hypothesis testing’ which may induce deeper learning

processes and assist in the internalisation of correct forms and structures (Ferris, 2011). On the other hand, there is evidence that indirect feedback can be difficult for students to make sense of (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Murphy (2000) claims that some students, particularly non-mainstream students, may find indirect comments confusing and may need more explicit guidance. It has been suggested that direct feedback is better for learners with low proficiency levels, whereas indirect feedback is suited to more advanced learners who can self-correct (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Ferris and Roberts (2001) also question whether indirect feedback is appropriate for complicated and idiosyncratic errors in sentence structure, as they found in their study that students had difficulty editing such errors successfully compared to other types of errors. Because direct feedback provides learners with explicit correction, in some cases it is more effective in assisting learners to improve linguistic accuracy in written work (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010).

The direct versus indirect feedback concept seems to be limited to the field of second language writing. In addition, many of the studies investigate direct versus indirect feedback on language use (grammar and expression), with some studies only focusing on one particular grammatical issue, such as the use of articles. Therefore, the concept is too simplistic for feedback in the academic writing context, which goes beyond providing feedback only on linguistic accuracy. Moreover, the concept does not account for the different types of commentary within those two categories that are often seen in feedback on academic writing, such as modelling, explaining, suggesting, questioning and praising.

In the literature on academic writing, modelling is highlighted as a key feedback strategy. Modelling involves demonstrating to students the steps in a particular task or providing an example (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). For example, a teacher might provide a model sentence to show how to in-text reference a source, or model the process of revising for errors. The goal of modelling is for writing and revision processes to become overt and imitable (Lavelle, 2009). This reflects the Vygotskian (1978) approach to learning where writing is a product of



collaborative work and imitation, which in Vygotsky's view forms the basis of cognitive development. One of the advantages of modelling is that it builds self-efficacy as 'talking through' a process or providing a concrete example can be illuminating for students and encourages them to do the same in approaching a task (Habel, 2009; Lavelle, 2009).

Another feedback strategy that is advocated in the literature is offering explanations. Ruiz-Primo (2011) defines explanations as statements that "provide information about *why* something is important, *when* it is used, and *how* it is used" and she argues that explanations are a "critical scaffolding strategy" (p. 20). She also suggests that explanations contribute to the development of metastrategic processes, that is, knowing which strategies to use in a given situation. Students report that they benefit most when comments include explanations so that they understand the meaning behind their teacher's feedback (Vincelette, 2013). Agius and Wilkinson's (2014) literature review on undergraduate students' views of feedback found that students valued comments that included examples and explanations and saw it as evidence of deep engagement from lecturers and tutors. In the literature on second language writing, metalinguistic explanation is seen to be beneficial for accuracy in writing over direct error correction alone (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

While modelling and explaining are more direct feedback strategies, indirect forms of commentary such as questioning and offering suggestions are also advocated. A study by Wilson et al. (2011) on co-constructing academic literacy suggests that an appropriate question can prompt a student to think more deeply and critically. Similarly, Wolsey (2008) asserts that using leading questions helps a writer to expand, elaborate or clarify a point by focusing attention, challenging an idea, or indicating a direction. Wolsey also recommends offering suggestions, advice and hints to facilitate students' development, as it encourages the student to self-correct and to engage in reflective inquiry. Suggestions also recognise the student as a legitimate writer as they provide the option of choosing whether to take up the feedback (Morton et al., 2014). Moreover, it has been suggested that hedges and questions play an

interpersonal role, as they can help mitigate the potential criticism that feedback comments may convey (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006)

However, questions and suggestions can also be difficult for some students to decipher due to the implicit nature of indirect speech, such as requests that are phrased as questions (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Goldstein (2004) suggests teachers should be careful about how and when to mitigate comments, as it can be difficult for students to understand the intent of the teacher's comment when phrases like "You might consider doing X" are used. She suggests adding an explanation such as "You might consider doing X so that you can show the reader...." to help explain the intent. Ferris' (1997) analysis of English language learners' papers revealed that the students' revisions tended to be less successful when they were in response to written comments given in question form. She surmised that this was because students misinterpreted it as an indication that there was nothing wrong with that part of the paper since the teacher did not say directly what the student should 'fix'. Other than questions, Ferris did not find that any other type of comment form was significantly correlated with unsuccessful revisions. Similarly, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) found that neither the syntactic forms of comments (whether they were questions, declaratives or imperatives) nor their pragmatic shape (suggestion versus directive) played a role in how effectively their three case study participants revised using their teacher's commentary. Therefore, the relationship between comment form and the effectiveness of student revision is still unclear.

The final form of feedback that is advocated in the literature is positive feedback. Many scholars have argued how important positive feedback is for student confidence and motivation, including feedback that addresses students' self-efficacy or effort (Coffin et al., 2005; Goldstein, 2004; F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Straub, 2000). Overly critical feedback may undermine students' confidence as writers whereas positive feedback can be a highly motivating force (Coffin et al., 2005; Goldstein, 2004), and students want a balance between positive and negative comments so that feedback is motivating rather

than discouraging (Weaver, 2006). Positive comments are important because students need to know what is effective in their writing, not just how their writing could be improved (Coffin et al., 2005). Praise acknowledges the student's strengths as well as the strengths of the text, and it can reinforce the student's own perceptions about what is working and encourage them to use similar strategies for future texts (Goldstein, 2004). Therefore, praise can actually serve as a teaching function, even though it may not lead to any revisions of the text at hand. It has been noted that positive feedback may be perceived in different ways by students; in Hyland's (1998) case study, one student stated that praise was very important to her, whereas the other students felt it was unhelpful and possibly even insincere. This illustrates the individual nature of student response to feedback, and also reinforces Hyland and Hyland's (2001) argument that praise should not be gratuitous and should be genuinely deserved.

As was the case with studies investigating the focus of feedback, there are studies that offer frameworks for categorising the form of feedback. For example, in their examination of feedback on essays given to undergraduates studying biology, Merry and Orsmond (2008) adapted a coding system for categorising feedback that was originally developed by Brown, Gibbs, and Glover (2003). Their updated scheme contained the following categories: identifying errors, giving praise, correcting errors, explaining misunderstandings, demonstrating correct practice, engaging students in thinking, suggesting further study, justifying marks and suggesting approaches to future assignments. In contrast, Ferris' (1997) analysis of feedback to English language learners took an inductive approach to coding. By examining students' papers, Ferris created codes for the teachers' comments based on its intent or purpose which resulted in categories that included asking for information, making a request, giving information and making a positive comment. She also looked at the syntactic form and categorised them as a statement, question, imperative or exclamation. As outlined, Ferris and Merry and Orsmond's frameworks take a different approach to explaining the form of the feedback, perhaps due to the different class contexts and purpose of the feedback.

It is clear that there is an abundance of research into feedback practice and advice on what to focus on and how to form or express feedback. Most of the research discussed in this section describes feedback given to students in higher education in general or to feedback given in second language writing contexts. However, feedback from academic language and learning advisors is somewhat unique as it occurs at the drafting stage and the advisor does not mark or grade the paper. The following sections analyse the role of feedback in academic language and learning support contexts and explore the theoretical orientation that underpins this kind of feedback.

### **2.3.5 *The role of feedback in ALL support and academic writing development***

As discussed in § 2.2.3, ALL advisors provide support to students in a variety of ways. One-on-one consultations often involve providing formative feedback on drafts, which is considered an instrumental part of the academic advising process (Chanock, 2007; Habel, 2009). Feedback in this context aligns best with the definition proposed by Carless et al. (2011) who describe it as “dialogic processes and activities which can support and inform the student on the current task, whilst also developing the ability to self-regulate performance on future tasks” (p. 397). The focus on future performance is central to the philosophy of ALL advising because feedback in this context does not only involve error correction on the task at hand. This is a slightly different approach to other contexts. For example, in literature on second language writing, feedback is often referred to as “written corrective feedback” and is defined by Bitchener and Storch (2016) in the following way:

Written CF is a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by an L2 learner. It seeks to either correct the inaccurate usage or provide information about where the error has occurred and/or about the cause of the error and how it may be corrected.  
(p.1)

However, ALL advisors view feedback as not solely about correctness; it is also about responding as a reader to help students enhance their text. This might involve providing feedback to help students reframe their thinking about a topic, to indicate that more information is available or needed, to point to directions students could pursue, and/or to indicate alternative strategies to understand information or organise ideas (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In other words, feedback is more than simply identifying errors and making corrections; it also is about teaching and learning through interaction so that students become confident, competent and independent writers with strategies for revising their own work. Consultations with ALL advisors, therefore, constitute an extremely important place for students to improve writing skills through feedback on their work.

In the broader higher education context, there are a variety of purposes for providing feedback. According to Coffin et al. (2005, p. 104), the general purposes for providing feedback include:

- to teach, or reinforce, a particular aspect of disciplinary content;
- to explain or justify a grade;
- to support students' writing development;
- to teach specific academic writing conventions;
- to indicate strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing (perhaps in relation to a set of criteria); and/or
- to suggest how a student may improve in their next piece of writing.

The purpose of ALL advisors' feedback typically encompasses the last four of these six points. An advisor's feedback does not usually aim "to teach, or reinforce, a particular aspect of disciplinary content", as advisors will not necessarily have the disciplinary content knowledge of their students' courses. Most advisors have a background in education, linguistics and/or TESOL and will not necessarily have a deep level of content knowledge of the discipline in which their students are writing, such as business, social science and medicine. An advisor's feedback also does not aim "to explain or justify a grade". This type of feedback is linked to summative feedback and assessment, whereas an

advisor's feedback is formative, as the aim is to provide guidance for subsequent drafts rather than the rating or grading of students' work. As discussed in § 2.2.3 and as shown in Figure 1, an ALL advisor gives feedback while a text is under development. The intention is that the student will consider the issues raised by the advisor and choose whether or not to address them in the next draft which will later become the final submission for summative assessment by their educator. The other four purposes for providing feedback that Coffin et al. (2005) suggest are, however, relevant to advisor's feedback, and will now be discussed in turn.

First, an advisor's feedback aims to support students' writing development. As discussed in § 2.2, writing is fundamental to most teaching and learning activities in a degree and students will need to continue to develop their writing skills, particularly in the first year when they encounter a new "threshold" in writing (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015; Brockman et al., 2010; Gourlay, 2009). Advisors are well placed to foster students' general writing development as they provide specific help during the writing process and the feedback focuses on language within the context of an authentic task. According to Emmitt, Komesaroff, and Pollock (2006), this is an ideal situation for writing development as it occurs at the learner's time of need when the language is being used for a real purpose. There is also evidence that commenting on specific pieces of writing is more effective than talking about the elements of good writing in a general sense (Emmitt et al., 2006). Feedback can support the development of students' general written language conventions including grammar, punctuation and spelling, although there is some debate as to whether it is part of the advisor's job to give detailed grammatical feedback. Despite evidence of the positive impact of feedback on grammar (as discussed in § 2.3.3), it is often beyond the scope of an advisor's role to provide detailed grammatical feedback on students' papers, or advisors may not feel confident that they have the 'know-how' to explain complex grammatical rules (Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016; S. Jones et al., 2013). Nevertheless, a command of these basic skills is essential for quality academic writing (McNaught & Shaw, 2016) and is often the focus of feedback comments.

The second aim of advisors' feedback is to teach specific academic writing conventions within the context of the student's actual text. In addition to improving general writing skills, feedback can also be used to highlight the academic conventions within which students are expected to write, and can help socialise and induct students into academic writing practices (K. Hyland, 2009; Poulos & Mahony, 2008). Feedback from advisors can help students produce a text that has an effective argument, realised through good overall structural organisation as well as integration of evidence (Coffin et al., 2005). In addition, advisors' feedback can help students understand how different linguistic forms at the level of text structure (for example, choice of argument structure) and register (for example, choice of words and phrases) represent interpretations of knowledge rather than merely carrying content. Feedback can also help teach students referencing, which is a particularly difficult writing practice, both as a way to show how knowledge is constructed and as a technical skill (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2012; Hendricks & Quinn, 2000).

The third aim of advisors' feedback is to indicate strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing. Advisors may do this by drawing a student's attention to writing requirements and assessment criteria, which are usually explicit in the unit guides but may need deconstructing or decoding. This can help students develop the level of insight needed to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and notice the gap between their current standard of work and expectations set in the marking criteria and by educators. This notion aligns with Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which is a well-known theory in the field of second language acquisition that posits that learners may not be able to learn until they 'notice' the gap between their current ability and the required performance. Therefore, in a similar way to second language learners acquiring a language feature once they become aware of it (Schmidt, 1990), university and college students can learn features of academic discourse as they become aware and 'notice' these features via feedback.

The fourth aim of advisors' feedback is to suggest how a student may improve in their next piece of writing. Generally, the advisor's comments are intended to be both feedback on that particular piece of work, as well as information that

can be used to inform a student's future performance, which many researchers refer to as "feed-forward" (Beaumont, O'Doherty, & Shannon, 2011; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2006; Duncan, 2007; Evans, 2013; Orsmond, Maw, Park, Gomez, & Crook, 2013). Feed-forward is particularly useful for the development of students' writing as it provides a direction for future work to be undertaken, whether it be on subsequent drafts of the same paper or on other pieces of writing. If the feedback/feed-forward is effective, it will ideally lead students to be able to judge the quality of the texts they produce in the longer term and to be able to monitor themselves during the act of production (Sadler, 1989, 1998). This is important because self-regulation and learner autonomy are a key component of students' academic development. Of particular importance is formative feedback that can help students internalise the revision and editing processes so that they can initiate similar processes when undertaking future writing tasks.

It is important to note that most ALL departments/learning centres distance themselves from the terms "editing" and "proofreading"; in fact, most explicitly state that they do not offer proofreading services. Nevertheless, some students and even discipline staff associate individual consultations with "fixing up" assignments by editing and proofreading, which is a one-dimensional view of ALL support (Woodward-Kron, 2004). Proofreaders offer feedback that is typically much less formative than ALL advisors. In general, proofreaders are said to prescribe, whereas advisors are said to elicit; proofreaders identify problems and give corrections, while advisors enable the student to do this for him/herself (Harwood, Austin, & Macaulay, 2012). Advisors generally are not intending that the student correct every error, as Harwood et al. (2012) explain: "Although the student's immediate concern will be the success or failure of the text they are currently working on, writing centres must prioritise the enhancement of the writer's composing process, rather than simply cleaning up errors, and thus enhancing the product" (p. 581). Therefore, the advisor's role is seen more as an educator than as an editor, and studies on individual consultations have underlined the importance of the teaching and learning aspect of feedback from ALL advisors (Chanock, 2007; Wilson et al., 2011).



Moreover, the interaction between the advisor and student aims to be collegial and collaborative, rather than one-way and top-down.

### **2.3.6 Theorising feedback in ALL support**

The approach described above highlights a common understanding among ALL advisors in Australia of what constitutes successful teaching and learning of academic writing, and reflects Vygotsky's theories of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Morton et al. (2014) summarise the Vygotskian theoretical perspective in the following way:

Cognitive development occurs in highly contextualised activities and in collaboration with a more knowledgeable individual (the expert). For development to occur, the expert needs to provide the learner (the novice) with appropriate assistance, which is then internalised and used by the novice as their own individual resources (p. A-26).

Sociocultural theory builds on Vygotsky's theory of learning and posits that knowledge is co-constructed and higher-order thinking occurs in highly contextualised interactions (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). This aligns with the conceptualisation of academic writing as a learned skill whereby educators and advisors support and guide students' academic writing development, particularly in their first year of an undergraduate degree, and, hence, writing is often the product of collaborative work and imitation. Sociocultural theory also aligns well with the process approach to writing which places a high value on feedback from others during the drafting phase of writing (as described in § 2.2.3). Providing feedback on a draft allows the advisor to support a student's acquisition of text forms and composing processes by providing the student with "concrete and situated assistance on the development of their writing and ideas" (Morton et al., 2014, p. A-24).

Some researchers have attempted to label this social, collaborative approach more specifically. For example, Candlin and Plum (1999) propose the term 'induction' to describe the mediated process of helping undergraduate students learn their discipline's writing practices. Woodward-Kron (2004) draws on the

metaphor of 'apprenticeship' to explain how students work with someone more experienced to learn about writing in an academic context. Some scholars have criticised the induction or apprentice model (such as Knowles, 1999, as cited in Morton et al., 2014), arguing that students are likely to simply accept feedback without question due to the difficulty of challenging the perceived authority of the 'expert'. However, as described, the interaction between the advisor and student aims to be collegial and cooperative, as per the sociocultural learning conceptual approach to co-constructing knowledge (Bitchener & Storch, 2016), rather than a one-way and top-down approach. Students may view the advisor as a less threatening but knowledgeable figure who is able to provide insight into what the discipline academic may expect of their writing (Chanock, 1995), and their feedback can help illuminate the 'rules of the game', that is, the assumptions known to discipline academics but less transparent to students (Wolsey, 2008). Therefore, feedback in this context aims to guide students to develop their own understandings about academic writing in order to make decisions about their work, thereby improving both their academic writing skills and their final products.

This sociocultural view of feedback differs from a cognitivist perspective, which is associated with a directive, corrective approach to feedback with an expert providing information to a passive recipient (Evans, 2013). From a cognitivist perspective, corrective feedback promotes learning by activating learners' inner cognitive processes such as attention and noticing (Rassaei, 2014). In contrast, sociocultural theory "views the direction of development from the social to the individual; that is, it proposes that cognitive functions appear first in social interactions, and subsequently become internalised within the individual" (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p. 68). From this perspective, feedback is seen as a process of communication and is, therefore, an inherently social and constructed phenomenon, rather than something that is 'given' or 'transmitted' to a student (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017). Research informed by sociocultural theory focuses on the human dimensions of interaction rather than the cognitive processes that take place inside the brain, and underpins much of the research into academic writing and feedback in higher education (for example, Barnard,

de Luca, & Li, 2015; Morton et al., 2014; Shrestha & Coffin, 2012; Wilson et al., 2011).

Two key constructs in sociocultural learning theory are Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. The ZPD is the gap between a student's actual level of understanding and the potential level of understanding that the student can achieve with support (Vygotsky, 1978). An advisor's feedback seeks to move the student forward in their ZPD by providing assistance within this zone of the student's aptitude. The idea is to challenge the student, but not beyond their ZPD, so that they can concentrate on elements that are within their range of competence. A widely-accepted term that is commonly linked to the theory of ZPD is the notion of scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to techniques that support developmental learning and problem solving that allow the student to grow in independence as a learner (Schwieter, 2010). In terms of feedback, scaffolding may include breaking down a task into steps to make it more manageable and achievable, providing some direction to help the student focus on achieving the goal, clearly indicating the differences between the student's work and the desired standard, modelling the expectations or goals, encouraging the student that he/she has done something well to boost self-esteem, and providing direct instruction (Lidz, 1991; Panahi et al., 2013). Ideally, these scaffolding techniques will encourage the student to become more self-sufficient in managing the task by monitoring and evaluating their writing and revisions, while at the same time help reduce frustration and obstacles and motivate the student's interest in the task.

Much of the advice from researchers and scholars about good feedback practice strongly reflects sociocultural learning theory and the notion of scaffolding. For example, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) well-known and widely-cited seven principles of good feedback practice, which are based on a synthesis of research literature, propose that effective feedback should:

- (1) clarify what good performance is;
- (2) facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection;
- (3) provide high quality information to students about their learning;

- (4) encourage dialogue around learning;
- (5) foster positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
- (6) provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance; and
- (7) provide information to teachers to guide teaching.

(Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 205)

These principles draw on sociocultural learning theory by advocating its core concepts of interactivity, scaffolding and self-regulation. Meyer and Niven (2007) offer a list of similar principles that reflect these concepts that is also based on an extensive review of feedback literature. They argue that good feedback should protect students' self-esteem and confidence and provide information about how to close the gap between what they wrote compared to an ideal answer. In addition, they argue that feedback should 'feed-forward' by providing advice on how to improve the next draft or assignment, should be meaning or content focused, should be dialogic and collegial. A more nuanced set of principles proposed by Straub (2000) resonates particularly well in the context of ALL advisor feedback, as his advice is the consequence of an investigation of feedback within a first-year college writing class in the United States. Straub (2000) identified seven principles for effective teacher feedback, which can be read as advice or good practices:

- (1) Turn comments into a conversation;
- (2) Avoid taking control of the student's text;
- (3) Prioritise giving comments on global concerns such as content and organisation before addressing style and correctness;
- (4) Limit the scope and number of comments;
- (5) Focus the comments to reflect the stage or draft of the text;
- (6) Individualise comments to fit each student;
- (7) Praise writing often.

(Straub, 2000, pp. 28-48)

Each of these sets of principles reflect a sociocultural theoretical orientation as they advocate a dialogic, collegial, individualised approach to feedback that sits

within the student's ZPD and encourages self-regulation. This kind of feedback is, arguably, easiest to provide in one-on-one, face-to-face consultation sessions where feedback is given as part of a conversation and is, therefore, more likely to be graduated and responsive to the student's individual needs as they emerge during the session. However, in many cases, feedback is not a live interaction and is provided asynchronously in writing or in a recording. Therefore, achieving the abovementioned good practice principles based on sociocultural theory may be more of a challenge, as the method is likely to impact on the provision of feedback in terms of the quantity, quality and nature of the feedback comments (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). An analysis of different modes of feedback is provided in the following section, focusing on common asynchronous electronic methods.

## **2.4 Feedback mode**

There is a range of methods for providing feedback to students. More traditional methods include handwriting comments on students' work, providing printed feedback sheets, having individual face-to-face meetings, or providing group feedback and model answers to the whole class (for a more comprehensive review of these methods, see Race, 2004). While these methods have advantages and are still commonly used, electronic methods are increasingly being adopted as assignments are usually submitted online through an online class space (known as a learning management system or virtual learning environment). Moreover, there are increasing numbers of students who study online resulting in a greater reliance on electronic communication, consequently leading to changes in modes of providing feedback.

Electronic or technological feedback refers to synchronous or asynchronous feedback that is delivered using digital technology such as word processors, audio files, webcam, screen-capture videos, and other applications and software. In general, electronic methods have been shown to improve efficiency and lead to higher engagement with the feedback by students (Race, 2004). There has been a significant growth in the amount of research focusing on

technological feedback methods within the past 10 years. The following sections will analyse the literature related to three feedback methods that are relevant to this study: electronic written feedback, audio feedback and screen-capture video feedback.

#### **2.4.1 Electronic written feedback**

The most common way to provide written feedback in electronic form is by providing typed comments, which can then be emailed to a student or uploaded to a learning management system. Electronic written comments can be given as a paragraph of text and/or as annotations on students' work using the comments feature of software such as Microsoft Word to insert annotations throughout the student's paper that appear in the margins of the document. A study by Hepplestone, Parkin, Irwin, Holden, and Thorpe (2010) on technology-enhanced feedback found that there was a strong preference among students for typed feedback over handwritten feedback. Although some students perceived handwritten feedback as more personal, typed feedback was perceived to be more thoughtful as students recognised that teachers "could more easily edit and revise their feedback as they read through assignments, thus presenting a more cohesive and considered response" (Hepplestone et al., 2010, p. 10). In Wolsey's (2008) feedback study with postgraduate students, the students stated that they liked the Microsoft Word annotations as it was useful and clear what part of the text the marker was referring to, and they preferred feedback "that is embedded at the point in the students' written work that provoked the comment or question from the professor" (p. 323). This was also a benefit pointed out by students in Mathieson's (2012) study, especially when they printed out the feedback. It has also been suggested that providing separate comments shows greater respect for a student than writing directly on the student's text (Ivanic, Clark, & Rimmershaw, 2000) or when making changes using 'Track Changes' in Microsoft Word.

Despite these benefits, written feedback, whether typed or handwritten, has shortcomings. As discussed in § 2.3.2, studies have shown that that students often find feedback difficult to understand, ambiguous, impersonal, and lacking detail on how to improve (Bennett & Nair, 2011; Chanock, 2000; Coffin et al., 2005; Crook et al., 2012; Dube, 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009; F. Hyland, 2003; Stannard, 2007), and some researchers have suggested that the mode of feedback might be part of the problem. For instance, Kerr and McLaughlin (2008) note that students may misconstrue written comments and suggest that students are perhaps “becoming less comfortable in processing written information” (p. 3). Crook et al. (2012) concur that written feedback has the potential to be misunderstood, and additionally note that written feedback rarely conveys all the nuances the writer is trying to put across. It has also been found that some students feel overwhelmed by large amounts of written feedback (Lee, 2014; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In a practical sense, handwritten comments can be difficult to read, and even word-processed comments can be hard to decipher when scattered through a document using Word’s Track Changes or Commenting features (Bond, 2009). There are also obvious limitations for students with dyslexia or visual impairments. Consequently, many scholars advocate using alternate forms of feedback delivery, particularly in forms that are multimodal (Anson, 2015; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Crook et al., 2012; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Merry & Orsmond, 2008).

#### **2.4.2 Audio feedback**

Initial investigations into non-text-based electronic feedback focused on the use of audio feedback (that is, recorded spoken feedback) as an alternative or complement to written comments. A number of universities have trialled audio feedback with success and found it to be of value as it increased both the quantity and the quality of feedback provided, and students had a very positive response (Bond, 2009; Chew, 2014; Gardner, 2004; Gould & Day, 2013; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice, Curtis, Phillips, & Wells, 2007; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Trimmingham & Simmons, 2009; Voelkel & Mello, 2014). Merry and Orsmond’s (2008) study found that undergraduate students

appreciated audio feedback because it was perceived as being of good quality and had more depth than conventional written feedback. The students reported that audio feedback was clearer than written feedback as the teacher could use tone and volume to aid understanding, and there was, therefore, less scope for ambiguity. The teachers in the study found audio feedback particularly valuable to explain complex ideas and were able to suggest strategies for solving problems rather than just stating what the problems were. A recurring theme in the studies is that audio feedback is particularly effective for feedback on discourse, reader response, sense of audience, social context rather than other areas such as correction of syntax or punctuation (Gardner, 2004).

Audio feedback was also found to have a positive impact on students' work. Ice et al. (2007) found that students were three times more likely to apply advice from audio feedback than they were for text-based feedback. Similarly, Merry and Orsmond (2008) found that students implemented the audio feedback more effectively and demonstrated that they did consider the feedback in some depth. In a study by Carruthers et al. (2015), students were asked whether they would be likely to refer back to this feedback when preparing other pieces of coursework for submission, and 69% responded yes. This indicates the potential for this type of feedback to promote and facilitate feed-forward learning.

Some interesting affective benefits of audio feedback were also reported. The student participants in both Merry and Orsmond (2008) and Bond's (2009) study perceived audio feedback to be more personal than written feedback, as the teacher conveys a sense that he/she is interested in the student's work. Interestingly, Bond (2009) found that some students preferred recorded feedback over face-to-face feedback because comments can be received without the student feeling under pressure to react or explain and there is less sense of 'losing face' if the feedback is negative. In addition, students stated that they preferred recorded audio feedback over face-to-face feedback as it can be listened to more than once.



Merry and Orsmond's (2008) study was particularly interesting as they also measured the differences in types of commentary between written and audio feedback. They classified the teachers' feedback comments into nine categories: identifying errors, giving praise, correcting errors, explaining misunderstandings, demonstrating correct practice, engaging students in thinking, suggesting further study, justifying marks and suggesting approaches to future assignments. There were two categories with statistically significant discrepancies between written and audio feedback. First, there were over three times more written comments than audio comments related to 'identifying errors', and second, there were three times more audio comments for 'demonstrating correct practice' than written feedback. The researchers postulated that both of these findings could be attributed to time and space constraints when writing comments in the margin, whereas spoken audio feedback allowed for more elaboration.

While there are clear benefits of audio feedback for students, the direct advantages for teachers are not as obvious. While providing spoken feedback is, word-for-word, faster than writing it, it is not necessarily the case that the whole process is less time-consuming. In the project that Bond (2009) evaluated, teachers said that using audio feedback did not save them time, but that they were able to provide more and better feedback within the same time. In addition, it may take longer to produce the feedback initially as teachers are learning how to use the technology involved, but becomes quicker thereafter. Although there appears to be no immediate timesaving benefits to teachers, audio feedback may be more efficient in the long run; a lecturer involved in Bond's (2009) study noted that he experienced a fall from 50% to 5% in the number of students requesting follow-up meetings after receiving audio feedback on an essay. He believes that this is because the audio feedback is less ambiguous than written feedback, and estimated that it saved him about six hours' worth of meetings, as well as time saved preparing for such meetings. Lecturers who participated in the study by Carruthers et al. (2015) stated that they were highly satisfied with the use of the audio feedback for summative assessment and expressed a preference to use it in the future.

Nevertheless, as audio feedback has been applied to a range of contexts, some limitations have surfaced. A drawback that was highlighted in two studies is that the student cannot directly see the elements of the paper that the teacher is discussing, unlike comments that are written or typed in the margins (Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Bond, 2009). Therefore, the lack of visual elements in audio-only feedback could make the feedback difficult to follow and act upon. Moreover, the researchers of the various studies did not mention whether particular students, such as students from a non-English speaking background, preferred written or audio comments. None of the studies reported any issues with sound quality; however, a pitfall of one of the studies was the large size of the audio files (up to 11MB) that made them incompatible with some email systems and consequently some students were unable to receive the files (Merry & Orsmond, 2008). However, recent technological advancements and new applications now mean that not only is audio feedback possible, but video feedback, which includes audio, is also highly feasible.

#### **2.4.3 Screen-capture video feedback**

Video has been used successfully in many aspects of teaching and learning and more recently, the use of video for feedback provision has received special attention. Some university teachers have experimented with the use of webcams to provide individual feedback videos, that is, where the camera is focused on the head and shoulders of the teacher. Like audio feedback, it has been found that webcam feedback allows teachers to elaborate and give more detail, and students find the feedback personal, supportive and easier to understand (Borup, West, & Thomas, 2015; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Parton, Crain-Dorough, & Hancock, 2010). However, as with audio feedback, it was identified that it can be difficult for students to find the specific sections of the assignment that relate to the video comments (Borup et al., 2015; Henderson & Phillips, 2015). In addition, a number of students in Henderson and Phillips' (2015) study said they were anxious about seeing the teacher's face, particularly if they anticipated that they would receive negative feedback.

The use of screen-capture video (also referred to as screencasts) is another development in alternative methods of providing feedback to students. Many of the positive benefits associated with audio feedback apply to screen-capture video feedback, and additionally, screen-capture addresses the visual barriers of audio-only feedback. Screen-capture software allows the user to record their on-screen activity as if there was a camera pointed at the computer screen. Every on-screen action, such as scrolling through a document, navigating through websites, typing, and highlighting, is recorded as a video. In addition, audio narration is simultaneously recorded using a built-in microphone or headset. The video can be shared via email attachment or be uploaded to a server and shared via a link.

When used for giving feedback, a teacher would typically open a student's paper on their screen and do an initial review of the paper. Then, they would turn on the screen-capture software and record the screen as they scroll through, highlight, and verbally comment on students' work. The teacher may also show marking rubrics, websites or the online class space. Then, the resulting narrated video can be forwarded to the students, usually as a link. The student can click the link and watch the recorded video of the teacher's computer screen and listen to the teacher's commentary while watching the cursor move and highlight selections of the text for illustration. An example of screen-capture video feedback can be accessed here:

<http://www.screencast.com/t/NNiCbvG3>

Screen-capture technology has been available for over 15 years and is widely used for demonstrations of computer software (N. Jones, Georghiadis, & Gunson, 2012). However, it has only recently been utilised in educational contexts. It has been used in the library community for instructional purposes such as for showing students how to do online literature searches (Carr & Ly, 2009; Wales & Robertson, 2008), for promoting database trials (Emanuel, 2013) and for teaching referencing skills (Stagg, Kimmins, & Pavlovski, 2013). Screen-capture videos have also been used to teach statistics to psychology students (Lloyd & Robertson, 2012), to work through mathematics problems in an undergraduate course (Robinson, Loch, & Croft, 2015), and for generic

feedback videos to student cohorts (Crook et al., 2012). In its early days, video feedback had a limitation; videos files had to be compressed before they could be sent to the students, which was time-consuming and required technical knowledge on the part of the teacher. Currently, most screen-capture websites provide free server space where videos can be uploaded and stored in a private account, and only the resulting link needs to be emailed to students. This means there is controlled access to each video; that is, only those who are sent the link can view the video. It is also possible to save the video locally.

Because the use of screen-capture technology is a relatively recent development in the educational context, there is a limited amount of research on using screen-capture video for individual feedback. Early research on screen-capture video feedback originated from universities in the United Kingdom. Russell Stannard (2006, 2008) was the first to report on using screen-capture software for feedback purposes. He used screen capture software while correcting grammar and spelling in essays in an English as a foreign language course at the University of Westminster. He reports that the students felt they were getting more input from their teacher and that students felt it was more 'human' as they could hear the teacher's voice. He stated that the method worked well for the mechanical process of correcting spelling and grammar, but in a later article he wrote that it actually "works best when you want to elaborate and expand on your feedback and not simply correct grammar or spelling, for example when you want to offer comments on an essay's structure, content or ideas" (Stannard, 2012, para. 8). Stannard's initial study was small-scale though, with only 12 students in the English language class and the evaluation of the video feedback was collected in an in-class informal feedback session with students. Nevertheless, it created substantial interest in the educational community and was discussed in articles in the United Kingdom national press (Stannard, 2006, 2012).

Two years after the publication of Stannard's initial article, screen-capture video feedback was explored further by Kerr and McLaughlin (2008) in a large-scale study within the School of Biology at the University of Edinburgh. Kerr and McLaughlin noted that while Stannard's study proved video feedback

worked well for the mechanical aspects of spelling and grammar, they wanted to trial a blended approach by making written comments in the body of the essay then creating a screen-capture video at the end to give a summary of the work as a whole. They arranged for markers from the School of Biology to use screen-capture software to provide video summaries on student work submitted electronically. They then collected survey information on the reactions of 90 students and markers who used the software. Like Stannard's study, Kerr and McLaughlin's research purely focused on the perceptions of the software and mode of feedback. In assessing acceptability, both Stannard and Kerr and McLaughlin found that students rated video feedback more highly than written feedback. Kerr and McLaughlin's study led them to create a set of guidelines and principles for teachers for creating video feedback, and screen-capture video feedback is still used in the School of Biology to this day (W. Kerr, personal communication, April 15, 2016).

Coventry University also undertook research in 2008 with German translation students and came to similar conclusions. The focus of this study, which was conducted by Brick and Holmes (2008), was again on student perception of the feedback as well as working towards a clear methodology for this kind of feedback. Like Stannard and Kerr and McLaughlin, Brick and Holmes note that while correction was quick, emailing the videos to the students was time consuming as the videos had to be compressed. The large file size of the videos was a limitation, as not only did it take time to compress the video, but some recipients also had technical problems due to slower internet connections or their email accounts would not allow certain size attachments. As mentioned, most of the current screen-capture programs provide free server space where videos can be uploaded and stored and the resulting link emailed to students, which means there is no large file to attach to the email.

There are a handful of more recent studies evaluating the use of screen-capture video feedback in higher education. One of the strengths of the recent body of literature is that video feedback has been explored in a range of educational contexts in different places around the world. Many of the studies are situated in language classes across the globe including in the United States (Elola &

Oskoz, 2016), Canada (Sérór, 2012), and the United Kingdom (Harper et al., 2012; Harper et al., 2015). The remainder of the studies are situated within other disciplines such as business management at Cardiff Metropolitan University in Wales (N. Jones et al., 2012), political science at Indiana University in the United States (Anson, 2015), education at Edith Cowan University in Australia (Turner & West, 2013), science at Keele University in the United Kingdom (Hope, 2011), statistics and research methods at A.T. Still University in the United States (Mathieson, 2012) and writing composition for engineers at the University of California (Silva, 2012). From these studies, five common themes have emerged from the findings with regards to the students' perspective.

First, students feel that they receive a greater quantity of feedback and are provided with more detailed information when given screen-capture video feedback (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; N. Jones et al., 2012; Mathieson, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Due to the volume of detail, students rate the video feedback as richer (N. Jones et al., 2012), more comprehensive (Mathieson, 2012), more constructive (Anson, 2015), more useful (Hope, 2011) and more informative and valuable (Turner & West, 2013) than written feedback. Turner and West (2013) suggest that this is because teachers are able to say more in a video than what can typically be provided in written feedback. As evidence for this claim, Anson (2015) performed word counts of video feedback and written feedback on similar assignments and found that video "allows for seven to eight times more content in the same amount of grading time compared to handwritten comments" (p. 378).

Second, students indicate that the video feedback is clear and unambiguous, which is likely to be linked to the degree of detail discussed in the previous paragraph. Students say that the video feedback was easier to understand than written feedback (N. Jones et al., 2012; Stannard, 2008) and they appreciate the clear explanations (Harper et al., 2012; Silva, 2012). Several of the researchers suggest that this may be due to the spoken aspect. For example, Anson (2015) hypothesises that the spoken language is easier for students to understand as full sentences are used instead of snippets of text that are often used when

giving written feedback. Similarly, N. Jones et al. (2012) suggest that the tone of voice and intonation helps to clarify the intended meaning and avoid misunderstandings which can result from interpreting written feedback. Harper et al. (2012) and Harper et al. (2015) reported that the spoken nuances helped students in their study to discern the most important aspects of the feedback, which helped them to clearly prioritise their revisions.

The third strong theme in the literature is that students perceive video feedback as being more personal, caring and conversational (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; N. Jones et al., 2012; Mathieson, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Students in several studies felt that the teacher invested effort into reading and evaluating their work, and cared about their learning (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Hope, 2011; Turner & West, 2013). Interestingly, students also report that it feels like they are having a face-to-face conversation with their teacher even though it is asynchronous and, therefore, not a live dialogue (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2012; N. Jones et al., 2012). Although not the focus of his study, Anson (2015) argues that these affective benefits could be particularly important for online students who typically feel more distant from the teacher, as video feedback can increase the sense of the teacher's presence. Indeed, the online students in Mathieson's (2012) felt that video feedback helped them feel more connected to their teacher.

The fourth theme in the body of research, which seems to be closely linked to the previous theme, is that students find video feedback engaging (Harper et al., 2012; Hope, 2011; Séror, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Harper et al. (2012) surmise that students are engaged by the teacher's tone of voice and expression. Another possible explanation is that video reflects student's frequent use of technology in their life and many students are, in fact, quite used to engaging with texts multimodally (N. Jones et al., 2012; Séror, 2012). It has also been suggested that the novelty of the approach also helps keep students engaged (N. Jones et al., 2012). Despite engagement being a common theme in the findings, Anson (2015) found that higher ratings on engagement with video feedback compared to written feedback in his survey were not statistically

significant, although the ratings of other items were significant such as being more helpful, caring and constructive.

The fifth and final key theme in the research findings is that students strongly prefer screen-capture video feedback to other forms of feedback (Anson, 2015; Hope, 2011; Mathieson, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Hope (2011) reported that the students in her study were “overwhelmingly positive, with many students indicating that they would like to receive other feedback in this way” (p. 10), and students in Mathieson’s (2012) study stated they would like to receive video feedback if given a choice in future classes. Similarly, 92% of students surveyed in Turner and West’s (2013) study preferred screen-capture video feedback over written feedback. Interestingly, some students even preferred video feedback to face-to-face feedback conversations, as they could watch the video multiple times (Harper et al., 2015), and for a student from a non-English speaking background, this alleviated a lot of anxiety about having to ask the teacher to repeat themselves (N. Jones et al., 2012). Harper et al. (2012) also suggest that video feedback can be “less daunting than face-to-face feedback since the student receives it in private and does not lose face or feel put on the spot” (p. 2).

Similar themes also arose in studies that explored the teachers’ perspectives of screen-capture video feedback. Teachers agreed that video allows for more depth, detail and elaboration (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Harper et al., 2015) and that they can easily and quickly explain things verbally (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Séror, 2012). Like students, teachers also valued being able to produce conversational and more personalised feedback than traditional written feedback (Séror, 2012). One teacher surveyed in the study by Harper et al. (2015) said that her video feedback felt warmer than written feedback and that there was “an imagined dialogue” (p. 12). Teachers also highlighted several pedagogical benefits of video feedback, such as it being less overwhelming for students than lots of written text (Harper et al., 2015), and by keeping students “active and at the centre of the redrafting process” (Séror, 2012, p. 113). Teachers also thought that video feedback might be more effective than written feedback for certain types of learners, such as students with dyslexia (Harper et



al., 2015). In terms of practicalities, almost all of the studies found that the time required to produce screen-capture video feedback is no longer or shorter than providing written feedback, although an initial investment of time and effort to learn the technology is required (Harper et al., 2015; N. Jones et al., 2012; Séror, 2012; Silva, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). One study reported that it took the teacher longer to produce video feedback than written feedback (Mathieson, 2012). Many researchers recommend a five-minute time limit for videos in order to be educationally effective and manageable for both students and teachers (Bond, 2009; Harper et al., 2012; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Séror, 2012).

All of the abovementioned themes are based on perceptions of video feedback, as almost all of the studies were based solely on survey or interview data. As a result, there is limited evidence regarding the impact of video on the feedback itself or on students' uptake of feedback, which is surprising given that there is such interest. Our recent study (Cavaleri et al., 2014) investigated these issues by quantitatively comparing the feedback and the revised drafts. Analysis of the 12 students' revisions after receiving feedback revealed that 89% of the video comments led students to make a successful revision, compared to 72% for written comments. The advisor was more likely to comment on linguistic errors with the written mode of feedback compared to the video mode. The study also revealed that the written feedback contained more direct feedback comments, with 'directive' and 'demonstration/modelling' comments making up 59% of the written comments compared to 42% of the video comments. Indirect feedback, by contrast, tended to occur more with the video mode of feedback, with 'explanation' and 'advice/suggestion' comments making up 44% of the video comments compared to 28% of the written comments. The authors suggest that it was these types of meaningful comments that led to the higher proportion of successful revisions.

Elola and Oskoz (2016) used a similar methodology where they coded written feedback and screen-capture video feedback given to four students to look for differences between the two modes. They found that the teacher gave more detailed feedback with video feedback than written feedback, including longer

explanations on content, structure and organisation. The teacher was also found to be more explicit in relation to language errors when giving written feedback. The researchers found there was a similar uptake of feedback with both modes, but the students preferred the video feedback for global aspects, such as content, structure, and organisation, and the written feedback for language and form issues. Students mentioned some other interesting benefits of this mode; some students felt they received more positive feedback, and one student pointed out that viewing the video provided a meaningful opportunity to develop her listening skills (the feedback was provided in a language class). This was also a benefit cited by English language learners in Stannard's (2008) study, who felt that the video provided authentic listening material.

Despite the positive aspects of screen-capture video feedback found in recent studies, there are several limitations to this method. As mentioned, while certain types of students may benefit from this audio-visual method of feedback, it is much less suitable for students with hearing disabilities. Another limitation regarding student accessibility and use is that students need to be online to view the video. An additional concern is that if students do not have access to equipment such as headphones, or if they watch feedback videos in a distracting environment, they may be less likely to retain information from the videos or they may not watch the videos at all. As mentioned, teachers also need time and perhaps training to learn the technology in order to effectively use screen-capture for feedback.

Nevertheless, the studies on screen-capture video feedback indicate that there is a strong interest in this kind of feedback because it offers different benefits than written feedback. What appears to be at the heart of these differences is the fact that video feedback is spoken, rather than written. The following section discusses how the findings of the abovementioned studies could be attributed to the differences between written and spoken language as well as theory about multimedia learning.

#### **2.4.4 Theorising feedback mode**

As discussed, a strong theme in the studies on audio feedback and video feedback is that students find spoken recorded feedback clearer and easier to understand than written feedback. This could be attributed to the differences between spoken and written language. For example, one explanation is that students might perceive spoken feedback as 'easier' to understand because it is the mode they are most familiar with; speech is much more prevalent than writing as people usually speak more than they write (Sindoni, 2014). This is because spoken language is used every day in both private and public interactions, whereas written language is mainly used in non-private life domains (Berman, 2015; Linell, 1982).

Another explanation for why students find spoken feedback easier to understand could be attributed to the differences in the type of language and structures used with each mode. Compared to spoken language, written language contains more complex structures such as adverbial and prepositional phrases and complement and relative clauses (Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011). In addition, written language tends to utilise more nouns than verbs (Halliday, 1987, 1989) and noun phrase constructions are longer and syntactically more complex (Berman, 2015). Berman (2015) also noted that that written texts make use of more polysyllabic words (that is, words of three syllables or more), which are characteristic of words of lower frequency and a higher, more elevated register. In contrast, spoken language has a relative simplicity of structure and vocabulary. Spoken discourse is characterised by colloquial idioms, abbreviations and repetition, and grammar patterns tend to include minor sentences (that is, fragmented or incomplete sentences or clauses), coordination, phrasal verbs and contracted forms (Sindoni, 2014). These types of language and structures used in speech are simpler and more familiar than the vocabulary and structures used in writing, which might help explain why students perceive spoken feedback as being easier to interpret than written feedback.

However, a counter argument is that written feedback should be *easier* to digest than spoken feedback because writing tends to be more 'polished'. Unlike

speech, written language is planned, editable and revisable, which means the writer has time to construct a more refined, concise and grammatically correct text (Sindoni, 2014). On the other hand, spoken language is longer and includes more disfluencies, filler words and repetition, reflecting the improvised nature of speech and the step-by-step process of construction (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011). Speech also contains, on average, significantly more clauses in a single syntactic unit of discourse than in writing (Berman, 2015; Halliday, 1989), which seems to contradict the idea that written language is more complex than spoken. However, it is possible that written feedback can be so carefully crafted by a teacher that it becomes difficult for a student to unpack due to its formality, compactness and intricate structures (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). On the other hand, 'acceptably incorrect' spoken feedback and the repetition of information may, in fact, help with simplifying concepts and reinforcing points.

Another theme found in the studies on audio and video feedback is that students feel they received a greater quantity of and more detailed feedback compared to written feedback. This is because the teacher is able to produce more words verbally than if written or typed in the same amount of time; the difference estimated by Lunt and Curran (2010) is that five minutes of spoken feedback would take 30 minutes to provide in writing. However, the greater quantity of feedback may not necessarily equate to a higher number of issues in the student's text being addressed. Instead, as discussed above, the repetition and recycling of the same information may make feedback about a particular issue seem more detailed and, consequently, more comprehensible. As well as repetitions, spoken texts also contain more qualifiers (*very, really*), hedges (*just, perhaps*), segment taggers (*so, that's about it*) and other fillers and markers that are predominantly associated with speech (*mind you, you know, I mean, well, kind of, sort of, like*) which makes the text longer (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014). In contrast, written feedback is likely to be more compact and concise as the teacher has time to compose and revise the feedback. This means that written feedback would show greater density in packaging of information, which leads to a shorter text than what would be produced if it were spoken (Berman,

2015). Therefore, students are likely to receive a greater quantity of feedback if it were spoken, although it may not necessarily be feedback on a greater number of issues in their writing.

Students in previous studies also perceived audio and video feedback as being more personal and caring than written feedback, and this could also be attributed to the differences in writing and speech. First, personal pronouns (*I, you*) tend to be used more in spoken feedback than in written feedback.

Gardner (2004) found that in spoken feedback, 60% of pronouns were first or second person subjects compared to 30% in written feedback, meaning that 70% of pronouns in written feedback were third person subjects. Second, as outlined, writing is typically characterised by an elevated level of vocabulary, compact packaging of information and complex grammatical structures.

According to Berman (2015), this presents “a more detached and distanced discourse stance, generally avoiding subjective, interlocutor-oriented commentary” (p. 192). Third, written feedback is usually more direct than verbal feedback (Nassaji, 2015) because in speech, hedges are commonly used to “mitigate the force of what is said and thus protect both speaker’s and hearer’s face” (Coates, 2016, p. 90). Therefore, the use of voice may help to humanise, personalise and ‘soften’ the feedback.

The final prevalent theme in the literature on audio and video feedback is that students felt that the feedback was like a conversation. This is interesting given that the feedback is recorded and, therefore, not a live interaction where both the speaker and the listener are physically present at the same place. In a live discussion, the speaker’s words are supplemented by non-verbal signals such as gestures and facial expressions and the listener constantly responds both verbally and non-verbally, and this influences the speaker’s behavior (Linell, 1982). However, as audio and video feedback is recorded and screen-capture software records the computer screen rather than the teacher’s face, the spoken feedback is not accompanied by facial expressions and gestures and is not shaped by the student’s reaction. In addition, recorded audio and video feedback does not contain turn-taking, which is a hallmark of conversational interaction (Berman, 2015). Nevertheless, recorded speech retains many of the

same characteristics of live speech; it is produced rapidly and organically, and it relies on prosodic features such as intonation, loudness, pitch, tempo, rhythm, stress and pauses to help create meaning and convey information such as the speaker's feelings and attitudes (Sindoni, 2014). Therefore, Berman (2015) argues that even monologic spoken texts are more interactive and communicatively oriented than written texts. In addition, recorded spoken texts also have benefits that typically apply to written texts. For example, written language is usually planned and recorded spoken feedback can also be somewhat planned, as an advisor may prepare a basic outline prior to recording and pre-select which key issues to focus on. Recorded feedback can also be re-recorded if need be, just like a written text could be rewritten or revised before being sent to a reader. Students can also play back and re-access recorded spoken feedback just like they could with written feedback, whereas normally, speech is fleeting and words dissolve as soon as they are uttered (Sindoni, 2014). Recorded speech is, therefore, somewhat different to live speech and appears to sit somewhere between live dialogue and planned writing.

As well as the spoken commentary, screen-capture video feedback comprises synchronous visuals of the teacher's computer screen. The spoken feedback, image and text on screen, and movement that is captured all contribute to the meaning-making process (Sindoni, 2014). In other words, video feedback is a product of these integrations and is, therefore, considered a multimodal text. Consequently, multimodal learning theory has been suggested by several researchers as a way to understand and theorise about the benefits of video feedback (for example, Anson, 2015; Brick & Holmes, 2008; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Silva, 2012; Stannard, 2008), namely Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Clark & Mayer, 2008; Mayer, 2009). This theory stems from educational psychology and posits that the brain is a dual-channel, limited-capacity, active processing system; therefore, information that is presented in multiple modes (for example, visually and aurally) and in ways that minimise unnecessary cognitive load is ideal for meaningful learning (Clark & Mayer, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). Put simply, Mayer argues that multimedia learning can help students process information better.

Mayer's theory implies that using screen-capture video would enhance the effectiveness of feedback. This is because it combines the use of both visual and aural channels, which according to the theory, is superior to feedback that is presented in one mode, such as written-only feedback or audio-only feedback. Even if a student were to listen to audio-only feedback with their paper in hand, switching back and forth between the audio and their paper can lead to cognitive overload due to the split-attention effect, which would decrease the processing of essential information (Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 1998). On the other hand, the synchronous visual and audio aspects of video help reduce the load on a single processing channel and lead to better understanding and deeper learning (Mayer, 2009). For example, Mayer and Moreno's (2003) empirical research showed that learning from a video with animation and verbal commentary was more effective than learning from on-screen text, narration or animation alone.

Another facet of Mayer's argument is the personalisation principle. Mayer, Fennell, Farmer, and Campbell (2004) assert that people learn more deeply from information presented in conversational style rather than formal style. In their study using multimedia instruction with students, they found that taking a more personal, conversational spoken style in videos led to better recall and transfer of information than a more formal style. In addition, students indicated that they found videos in the conversational style more interesting. This suggests that because video feedback is felt to be more conversational (as highlighted in the studies discussed in § 2.4.3 and theorised about in this section), it may promote more meaningful learning.

Mayer's theory may explain why students have reacted very positively to screen-capture video feedback in previous studies. However, other than the studies by Cavaleri et al. (2014) and Elola and Oskoz (2016), the studies did not measure whether video feedback actually does lead to better understanding than written feedback as the theory suggests. Therefore, the papers that make claims that video feedback is better due to its multimodal nature are somewhat speculative. Other weaknesses and gaps in the literature are discussed in the following section.

## **2.5 Gaps in the literature and goals of the study**

There are several noteworthy gaps in the literature, many of which the current study aims to address. First, much of the research and theory on feedback has been developed in the field of second language writing where there is a heavy focus on feedback as error correction and its effect on students' acquisition of specific target grammatical structures. However, as discussed, the role of feedback from ALL advisors is different as it is not solely about correctness; it is also about helping students enhance their text and learn strategies for reviewing and revising their own work in terms of its content, structure, and style as well as general writing conventions. In addition, the approach typically taken by ALL advisors draws on sociocultural learning theory as it aims to be collegial and focus on scaffolding learning. Therefore, more research that is informed by sociocultural theory and focuses on the human dimensions of feedback in an ALL advising context is needed. This includes the need for a more robust analytical framework for classifying feedback and revisions; since error correction is somewhat marginal in relation to feedback in higher education, many of the proposed frameworks used in the studies in the field of second language writing are not appropriate for the feedback provided by ALL advisors.

Another gap in the literature is the small amount of research into modes of feedback other than written. As discussed, there has been some research into screen-capture video feedback which has clearly indicated that students and teachers perceive it favorably for a variety of reasons. Although these studies have provided a valuable foundation, they have not provided a thorough understanding of a number of key issues related to audio-visual feedback. This is in part due to the small number of studies that currently exist, as well as the dominance of small-scale studies. Apart from the studies by N. Jones et al. (2012) and Kerr and McLaughlin (2008) which had a sample size of 75 and 90 students respectively, most of the other studies have a small sample size, with one as low as four (Elola & Oskoz, 2016).

Another critical methodological limitation of the body of literature on screen-capture video feedback is the heavy reliance on survey and interview data.



While these data have provided a clear picture of student and staff perceptions about the use of video feedback, these studies rely solely on reported, rather than observed, behaviours and practices. The effectiveness of audio-visual feedback using objective measures has not been sufficiently addressed yet. In addition, the existing studies have provided little evidence regarding the differences in the nature of feedback and revisions between written and audio-visual feedback and whether these differences could be attributed to theories about written and spoken language. Therefore, more systematic analyses of how video influences feedback provision is needed, as well as objective measures of students' improvements in revising drafts. In addition, there is little information on what type of learners may benefit the most from each mode of feedback, such as those with low ELP and high ELP. These gaps in knowledge have been noted by several video feedback researchers who have called for more objective evidence comparing the differences and impact of written and video feedback (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012).

In the same vein, there is very little research into the differences in feedback mode from a sociocultural theoretical perspective. More research is needed that examines to what extent different modes of feedback represent a collegial approach that scaffolds student learning and encourages self-regulation, as advocated by feedback good practice principles based on sociocultural theory. While some researchers have suggested that audio and video feedback more closely aligns with this theoretical perspective than written feedback (Cavaleri et al., 2014; Gardner, 2004; Harper et al., 2012; Harper et al., 2015; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Séror, 2012), more evidence is needed to support this claim. Similarly, while some researchers have indicated that screen-capture video feedback may be effective due to its alignment with Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, studies have not yet provided convincing evidence for this. According to the theory, audio-visual, personalised media is said to help learners to process information better. However, the extent to which this theory is a valid explanation for the perceived positive learning outcomes of video feedback needs to be investigated more rigorously.

The present study was designed to address the issues outlined and begin to fill the gaps in the previous research. The goal of this study is to contribute to the emerging body of literature by investigating the effects of written and audio-visual mode on the provision of feedback and uptake of feedback by undergraduate student writers. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- (1) Does the mode of feedback affect the focus of the feedback and if so, how?
- (2) Does the mode of feedback affect the form the feedback takes and if so, how?
- (3) Does the mode of feedback affect students' uptake of feedback?
- (4) How do students perceive each mode of feedback and which do they prefer?
- (5) Are there any differences between students with low ELP and high ELP in terms of the feedback they received, their uptake of the feedback and their feedback preference?

The present study also adds to the previous research through the development and implementation of an original analysis mode designed to examine the focus, form and effect of both written and audio-visual feedback.

This study differs from previous work in this area in a number of ways. First, sociocultural theory is used as the theoretical basis for studying feedback on academic writing. Second, the study examines the effect of different modes of feedback using a more objective measure. Third, the study uses a mixed method research design to triangulate data, rather than relying on a single data source. Fourth, two different modes of feedback are contrasted, namely written and audio-visual, to help illuminate the effects of each mode. Finally, sub-groups of students are looked at closely to see if there are any benefits to particular types of learners. More detail about the study's method is given in Chapter 3.

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the literature on writing in higher education, feedback on writing and feedback methods was reviewed. Academic writing is a challenge for many students, and researchers agree that feedback that is collegial, scaffolds learning and encourages self-regulation plays an important role in helping students develop their writing skills and their texts. While there is much literature on principles of good feedback as well as literature on challenges to providing effective feedback, these issues have not been examined in light of newer, technologically-enhanced feedback methods such as screen-capture video feedback. Studies on video feedback indicate that students find it favourable and suggest that students may benefit from the audio-visual format and personalised feel. However, the analysis of the literature on video feedback revealed that there is little research on its impact on the feedback itself or its impact on students' understanding and uptake of the feedback. These factors motivated and informed the current study, which compares written feedback with audio-visual feedback. The next chapter details the research methodology for investigating the research questions.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of written and audio-visual mode on the provision of feedback and the uptake of feedback. More specifically, this study focuses on answering five research questions:

- (1) Does the mode of feedback affect the focus of the feedback and if so, how?
- (2) Does the mode of feedback affect the form the feedback takes and if so, how?
- (3) Does the mode of feedback affect students' uptake of feedback?
- (4) How do students perceive each mode of feedback and which do they prefer?
- (5) Are there any differences between students with low ELP and high ELP in terms of the feedback they received, their uptake of the feedback and their feedback preference?

The research questions were investigated using three methods: (1) an analysis of the advisor's feedback on the students' original texts and of the students' response to the feedback shown in their revised texts, (2) questionnaires completed by the student participants, and (3) one-on-one interviews with three student participants. This chapter will firstly describe the research approach, the research setting and the selection of participants. The sections that follow detail the data collection procedures and explain how the data were analysed. The final sections describe the ethical considerations and safeguards for the study's reliability and validity.

### **3.2 Research approach**

This study employs a mixed method design, combining elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches to answer the research questions. Mixed method research design was chosen as it allowed for a triangulation of methods, which provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and the ability to clarify results (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). The study involved quantitatively analysing the feedback and uptake of feedback and qualitatively investigating students' perceptions of the feedback. The quantitative data provided measurable evidence of the differences in feedback mode, helped to identify what factors influence the successful uptake of feedback, and facilitated the comparison of groups of students. The qualitative data helped make greater sense of the numerical findings and examined the views and perspectives of the students.

Within the framework of a mixed method research approach, the study was most suited to a case study design. According to Kitchenham (2010), case study design is ideal for mixed method research "as a myriad of approaches to research design, analysis, and interpretation are possible" (p. 562). Case study methodology involves an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003), and it is ideal for understanding and interpreting educational phenomena (Merriam, 2009). For this study, the case study design allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of feedback in a particular educational context. More specifically, the study could be identified as a collective or multiple case study (Stake, 2005), as one issue is focused on (feedback) and different cases are compared; that is, different students (those with high and low ELP) and different feedback methods (written and video) are compared for similarities and differences. This multiple case study approach is a way to theorise about a broader range of cases (Stake, 2005).

The study of a case requires the researcher to select methods and tools appropriate to the case. As mentioned, a key feature of mixed method research is the use of multiple sources of evidence instead of relying solely on a single source. This study achieved data triangulation by using three data collection

methods: feedback analysis, questionnaires, and one-on-one interviews. The analysis of the advisor's feedback on 40 student papers and the students' corresponding revisions illuminated how the mode of feedback affects the focus, form and uptake of the feedback. The feedback was analysed quantitatively using an analytical framework created specifically for this study. The framework was developed using a grounded theory approach, whereby analytic categories were developed while studying data (a more detailed explanation of this approach is given in § 3.6).

The data from the feedback analysis are supplemented by questionnaire data from the 20 student participants as well as data from one-on-one interviews that were conducted with three student participants. The objective of the questionnaire and interviews was to discover constructs, themes, and their relationships regarding students' perceptions and attitudes toward the feedback comments and feedback modes, their revision decisions, and feedback preferences. The study's conclusions are based on triangulating the data from the different sources, which adds to the study's credibility and trustworthiness (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Yin, 2013). A more detailed explanation of and justification for using these methods and tools will be given in §§ 3.5 and 3.6.

### **3.3 Research setting**

This study is situated at a higher education institution in Sydney that specialises in applied psychology degrees. The college was chosen for this study because the researcher works at the Sydney campus as the Manager of English Language Proficiency and Team Leader of Student Learning Support. The college offers a range of vocational (VET) diplomas and undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in counselling, psychology, coaching, social work, social science, case management and youth work. The college has campuses in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Adelaide, and students can study on campus, online or through blended delivery.

Although the college is a specialist provider, it functions in much the same way as universities in Australia. The college is a registered higher education

provider and a nationally recognised training organisation (RTO) and must comply with regulatory requirements such as those set by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). Eligible students are able to apply for FEE-HELP, which is a government loan program for student tuition fees.

In 2015, a total of 4890 students were enrolled at the college, with 1760 of those as undergraduate students enrolled in Bachelor degrees. Of those students, 698 commenced their Bachelor degree in 2015: 63% in counselling/coaching/applied social science, 34% in psychological sciences, and 4% in social work. Of all undergraduate students, 79% are female and 21% are male, and the median age of the undergraduate cohort is 35. Of the units (subjects) offered at the college, 52% are delivered on-campus, 42% online, and 6% in a blended mode.

To be admitted to one of the college's Bachelor degrees, applicants need a minimum Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) (that is, a student's High School Certificate aggregate mark) of 60, 65 or 70 depending on the course, although the college has flexible admission requirements for mature-aged students (more detail about the college's admission requirements is given in Appendix A). As a specialist provider, the college admits students from a wider academic spectrum than some other Australian tertiary institutions, as the admission requirements are generally lower than similar courses offered at universities. Consequently, students come to the college from a range of entry pathways and educational backgrounds, and the college serves many non-traditional students including first-generation students, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and mature-aged students. The college has a small proportion of overseas students at around 2%.

The college provides academic language and learning support to students via the Student Learning Support (SLS) department made up of eight qualified academic language and learning staff across three campuses. The SLS Sydney team is comprised of the team leader (the researcher of this current project) and three ALL advisors, and the team services Sydney-based students and all

online students. SLS has a strong service focus and explicit accountabilities. Under the direction of the Dean, SLS leads a number of broad initiatives related to English language proficiency, orientation and transition, retention, international students, and support of at-risk students. SLS supports students in a number of ways, including through individual consultations, curriculum-embedded teaching, workshops, webinars, and online learning resources.

Individual student consultations are a core activity of the SLS department, and the majority of the consultations involve an advisor reviewing and providing feedback on a draft assignment before the student submits the finalised paper to his or her educator. The feedback aims to offer students formative, critical advice and suggestions that may enhance the next draft. At the same time, the pedagogic approach also aims to develop the students' academic language and literacy knowledge and skills and to encourage an increasing level of autonomy around writing, revising and editing. Therefore, the goal of the feedback is learning, rather than the creation of a perfect paper. This pedagogic approach is based on the key concepts of sociocultural learning theory of scaffolding learning and encouraging self-regulation.

Individual consultations can occur as a face-to-face meeting, email, or phone call. In face-to-face meetings with advisors, students are provided with feedback and advice by looking at hard copies of the student's paper or by working on the document on a computer screen. However, providing feedback and advice is more difficult via email or phone. As mentioned, almost half of the units offered at the college are delivered online or in a blended mode, which means that some students rarely, if ever, visit a campus. Moreover, many on-campus students prefer to email their assignments and receive feedback online. Consequently, approximately half of the individual consultations occur over email. Because many students cannot easily, or choose not to, visit the physical Student Learning Support centre, it is important for SLS advisors to provide excellent online feedback services.

Online feedback is usually provided by using the 'Comments' feature in Microsoft Word to annotate the text with feedback and suggestions, and the



document is then emailed back to the student. In order to enhance these online interactions, SLS advisors also use the online screen-capture tool *Jing* as a way to quickly create and share individual, asynchronous feedback videos to students who request feedback over email. The videos are recorded immediately after the assessment is read, and while brief notes may be made as prompts, no script is written. Of the current screen-capture software options available, the SLS team prefer *Jing* for its ease of use, functionality, online storage space, and low cost (more information about *Jing* is given in § 3.5.1). In sum, the use of screen-capture video feedback was not implemented as part of this research project, but as an existing strategy that the SLS advisors use to provide feedback. Due to the advisors' use of both written and video feedback as well as the diversity of the student cohort, the college is an ideal environment in which to conduct the study.

### **3.4 Participants**

The study's participants came from the pool of students who had an individual email consultation with a Sydney-based SLS advisor in 2015. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select participants for the study, which is typical of a case study research approach. Purposeful sampling involves intentionally selecting information-rich cases that will yield the most insight about the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2013). The targeted population for this study was undergraduate students in their first year of study at the college. First year students were chosen because they tend to have less developed academic literacy skills than second or third year students, so the feedback on their writing tends to be richer. Therefore, a delimiting time frame of one year was decided on to ensure there was limited experience in academic writing.

All new students who commenced in 2015 were informed about the SLS service at orientation, during academic skills workshops and webinars, within online class spaces, and on posters around campus. As part of the regular SLS service, students could email SLS and request formative feedback on a written

assignment before they submitted it to their educator. If the student met the two criteria, that is, (1) they were enrolled in a Bachelor degree, and (2) they were in their first year of study, the reply email to the student informed them that they were eligible to participate in a study on feedback. The email contained a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) detailing what would be required in terms of submitting drafts and revised papers and completing the questionnaire at the end of the semester, and students were formally invited to participate in the study. Those that replied to the email agreeing to participate were then sent a participant consent form to sign (see Appendix C).

Of the 48 students who were invited to participate in the study, 20 individuals (41.6%) volunteered, gave consent, and completed all requirements of the study (submitting drafts and revisions and completing the questionnaire). Most of the students had previously never had contact with the advisor, although two had had one or two face-to-face consultations with the advisor and another two had received email feedback from the advisor previously. Six students were recruited in trimester 1, seven in trimester 2 and seven in trimester 3. The participants' demographic information was obtained through the college's student records database. The median age of the sample was 38.5 years (ranging from 21 to 59 years), and 85% (n = 17) were female and 15% (n = 3) were male. Students were enrolled in a variety of degrees: Bachelor of Counselling (n = 8), Bachelor of Counselling (Coaching) (n = 5), Bachelor of Psychological Science (n = 4), and Bachelor of Social Work (n = 3). Sixteen of the 20 students (80%) spoke English as their first language. This group of students was a fair representation of the first-year student cohort at the college (as described in § 3.3). Background information on these students is summarised in Table 1. To protect their identities, participant identification codes are used (abbreviated to PIC in the first row of the table). Each student was randomly assigned to one of two groups: Group A or Group B. The participant identification codes begin with 'A' or 'B' indicating the group to which the student was assigned.

Table 1. Summary of the 20 student participants

<b>PIC</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>L1</b>	<b>Bachelor degree</b>	<b>Study mode</b>	<b>MASUS score</b>
A1	F	21	English	Social Work	On-campus	4 (Low)
A2	F	53	English	Counselling	On-campus	12
A3	M	23	English	Counselling (Coaching)	Online	15 (High)
A4	M	25	English	Counselling (Coaching)	On-campus	12
A5	F	23	English	Counselling	On-campus	12
A6	F	55	English	Counselling	Blended	15 (High)
A7	F	52	English	Counselling	Online	11
A8	F	48	English	Counselling	Online	8 (Low)
A9	F	36	German	Psychological Science	On-campus	13
A10	F	33	English	Psychological Science	Online	12
B1	F	25	English	Social Work	On-campus	9 (Low)
B2	F	47	English	Social Work	On-campus	10 (Low)
B3	F	55	English	Counselling	Online	16 (High)
B4	F	35	German	Counselling (Coaching)	Blended	15 (High)
B5	F	32	Italian	Counselling (Coaching)	On-campus	13
B6	F	57	English	Psychological Science	On-campus	12
B7	M	35	English	Psychological Science	Online	13
B8	F	41	English	Counselling	On-campus	16 (High)
B9	F	59	English	Counselling (Coaching)	On-campus	13
B10	F	41	Farsi	Counselling	On-campus	7 (Low)

For the purposes of this study, the researcher measured each student's level of English language proficiency based on evaluation of their writing using the Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS) tool. MASUS is a diagnostic assessment instrument designed to measure students' academic literacy (Bonanno & Jones, 2007). It is used to evaluate a student's written text against four criteria measuring literacy and language skills: (1) information retrieval and processing of data, (2) structure and development of a text, (3) control of academic style, and (4) grammatical correctness (see Appendix D for a more detailed explanation of the MASUS criteria). A student's writing is rated on a scale of one to four for each of the four main criteria, with four being

excellent/appropriate/ accurate and one being poor/inappropriate/inaccurate. The MASUS tool was utilised as a way to reliably and consistently measure the writing skills of each student at the time they participated in the study. Not all participants had an IELTS or ATAR score, and of those that did, some of the scores were obtained several years ago. Moreover, evidence of writing proficiency that is based on course completion rather than actual language proficiency testing can be an inadequate measure (Oliver et al., 2012). The MASUS was specifically chosen as it is a well-regarded diagnostic assessment instrument in Australian higher education and had been used in many different contexts since the mid-1990s (Bonanno & Jones, 2007).

The researcher applied the MASUS rubric to the two papers submitted by each student for this study. The papers were given a rating for each criterion by considering the sub-criteria. The average of the two scores was taken to produce a single score for each student. The students with the five highest MASUS scores (students A3, A6, B3, B4 and B8) were classified as the 'high ELP' group and the five students with the lowest MASUS scores (students A1, A8, B1, B2 and B10) were classified at the 'low ELP' group. As will be described later in this chapter, the findings for these groups of students were isolated for comparison in order to address research question 5.

The researcher was also the only SLS staff member that participated in the study as the advisor giving feedback. The researcher is the team leader of SLS; however, for the purpose of this thesis, she will be referred to as an 'advisor' to avoid any confusion about her role with students. Only one advisor participated in the study in order to minimise further variables that may impact on the results if there were multiple advisors. Other studies have also investigated feedback given by only one person to ensure a homogeneous approach and style (for example, see Knauf, 2016). Moreover, given that the researcher is also the team leader of SLS, it raised questions about power dynamics if the researcher analysed the other advisors' feedback. The researcher/advisor's approach for giving feedback is based on the SLS Consultation Guidelines as well her professional experience. The SLS Consultation Guidelines were written by the national Head of SLS and state that part of the role of SLS advisors is to

facilitate students' language and writing skill development, provide some direct instruction, and review assignments and give feedback whilst not proofreading. The document also outlines principles that underpin the approach to SLS consultations, namely that learning is developmental and should involve scaffolding and modelling. The researcher/advisor's approach to working with students and giving feedback is a reflection of these principles and guidelines. Her approach is also influenced by her qualifications and experience in TESOL. The advisor also takes the position that while features of academic writing vary across institutions and disciplines, certain general aspects of academic writing can be isolated and taught. The advisor also believes that while there is a need to teach students how to write 'acceptably', there is still room for personal style. The advisor's aim is to ensure the process is formative, with students playing an active part in reshaping their text, rather than relying on the advisor to do so. Further discussion about the dual role as of the researcher as a participant in the study is provided in § 3.7 *Ethical considerations* and § 3.8 *Reliability and validity considerations*.

### **3.5 Data collection**

The information needed to answer the research questions comprised both textual and perceptual data. More specifically, the information needed included textual data from the feedback comments and students' revisions, and perceptual data from students about the feedback. Hence, the use of multiple data collection methods was necessary. This approach, known as triangulation, adds rigor, breadth, and depth to the study, and "may confirm inferences or render a multifaceted view of an issue" (Hood, 2009, p. 87). As has been noted, this study employed three data collection methods: feedback analysis, questionnaire, and interviews.

The process undertaken to collect the data from each student involved eight steps in three phases over the course of the trimester, as summarised in Figure 2. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted after the trimester finished so the participants could provide a reflective account of their feedback

experiences. This also ensured that the questionnaire and interviews did not take place at the same time as when assessments were due. The following sections provide more detailed explanations of each phase of data collection.

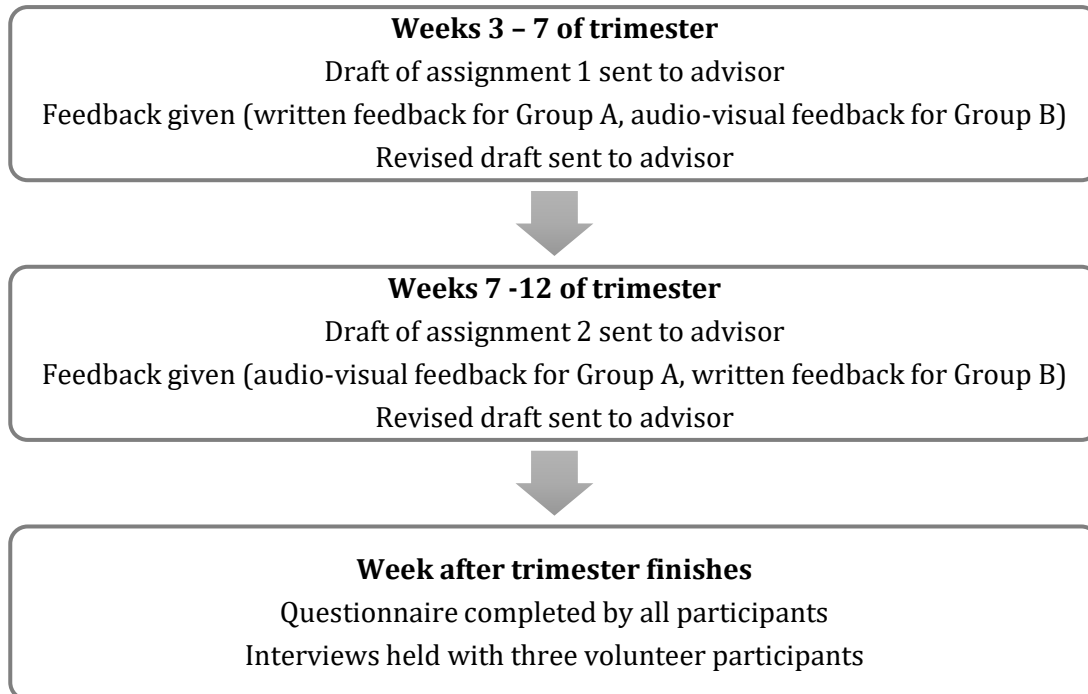


Figure 2. Data collection schedule

### **3.5.1 Feedback analysis**

To assess the differences between written and audio-visual mode, an analysis of the feedback comments and the students' revised drafts was the primary source of data. This method was felt to be the most pertinent for the study because it reveals information about the type of feedback that is given and the way it is given, and the impact of the feedback on students' revisions. The data is considered authentic because the students' texts are drafts of real assessment tasks and not elicited experimentally, and the advisor's feedback is part of the regular service offered by SLS at the college and was not designed specifically for this study. Authentic data is a key feature of applied linguistics research, whereby researchers analyse language that has occurred naturally as opposed to language that is produced only for research (Lazaraton, 2009). In addition, analysis using authentic data is a relatively objective tool of data gathering,

which increases the reliability and validity of the data and subsequent findings (Lazaraton, 2009). For example, in this study, it allowed the researcher to observe how students actually responded to feedback, rather than relying on what the students think or say they do with the feedback.

To examine how the mode affects the advisor's feedback and the students' uptake of feedback, each participant submitted two written assessment tasks to the advisor over the course of the trimester for formative feedback. On one piece of writing, the students received written feedback comments only. The advisor gave these comments using the "Comment" feature of Microsoft Word. This feature allows the advisor to highlight an aspect of a text they wish to comment on, then click the "Comment" button whereby a pop-up box appears in the right margin and the advisor can then write a comment. The annotated document is then saved and emailed to the student. (Note that "Track Changes" is not used). A sample of this kind of feedback is shown in Figure 3.

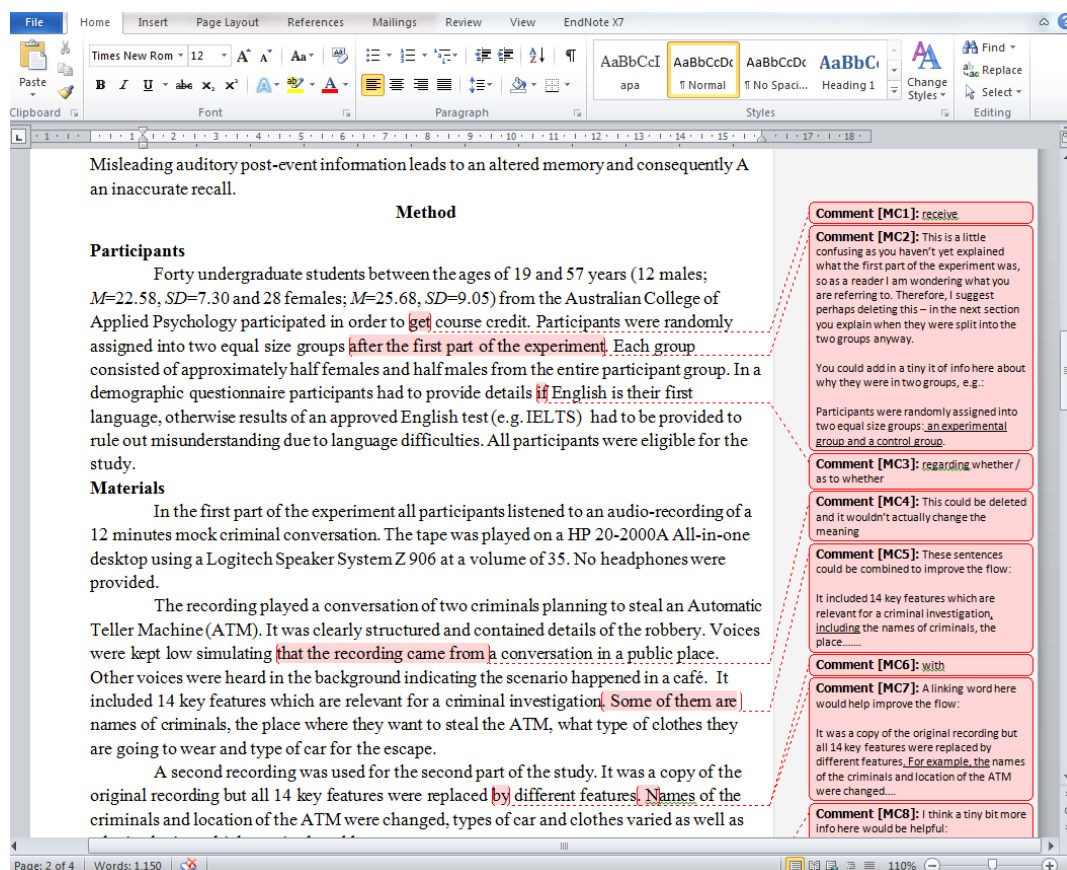


Figure 3. Example of the advisor's written feedback using the 'Comment' feature of Microsoft Word

For the other piece of writing, the students received audio-visual feedback, comprising screen-capture video feedback and minimal written comments. Screen-capture software records both the user's voice and their on-screen activity, and the user is able to share the video instantly. Before creating the video, the advisor pre-reads the paper and writes minimal written comments using the "Comments" feature of Microsoft Word. Most of these comments function as cues during the recording to which more detailed comments are made verbally. The advisor then opens the software and begins recording. The video records the student's assignment on-screen as the advisor scrolls through it, highlights aspects of it, uses the mouse to circle sections, and makes changes while making verbal comments. The video is then saved in a secure online account, and the advisor then emails the student the resulting link to the video. In order to record the commentary, the advisor used a headset consisting of headphones and a microphone (note that screen-capture does not require the use of a webcam). An example of screen-capture video feedback (with the student's permission) can be viewed by following this link: <http://www.screencast.com/t/NNiCbvG3>. A screen-shot of a screen-capture video is shown in Figure 4.

The screen-capture program called *Jing* by TechSmith was selected over a number of other applications for several reasons. First, *Jing* has a simple and intuitive interface that allows advisors to quickly create videos to share with students. While other screen-capture software such as *Captivate*, *Camtasia* and *Screencast-o-matic* have editing capabilities, the basic functionality of *Jing* is sufficient for creating 'on-the-fly' feedback videos that do not require editing. The second reason that *Jing* was chosen over other programs is that *Jing* is free; users simply need to download the free software. Although *Jing* videos are limited to a maximum recording time of five minutes, research and best practices indicate that this is, in fact, an ideal length in order to be educationally effective and manageable for both students and teachers (Bond, 2009; Harper et al., 2012; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Séror, 2012). The third reason for choosing *Jing* over other online screen-capture tools is that *Jing* provides free server space at *Screencast.com* where videos can be uploaded



and stored in a private account. When a video is uploaded to Screencast.com, a link is automatically generated which is easily shared via email. The students then click the link to view the video. This means there is controlled access to each video; that is, only those who are sent the link can view the video. The videos are viewed using a web browser, similar to streaming videos on YouTube. Many of the studies investigating screen-capture video feedback that were discussed in § 2.4.3 also utilised Jing due to its ease of use, functionality and low cost (for example, Anson, 2015; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Harper et al., 2012; Harper et al., 2015; Hope, 2011; Mathieson, 2012).

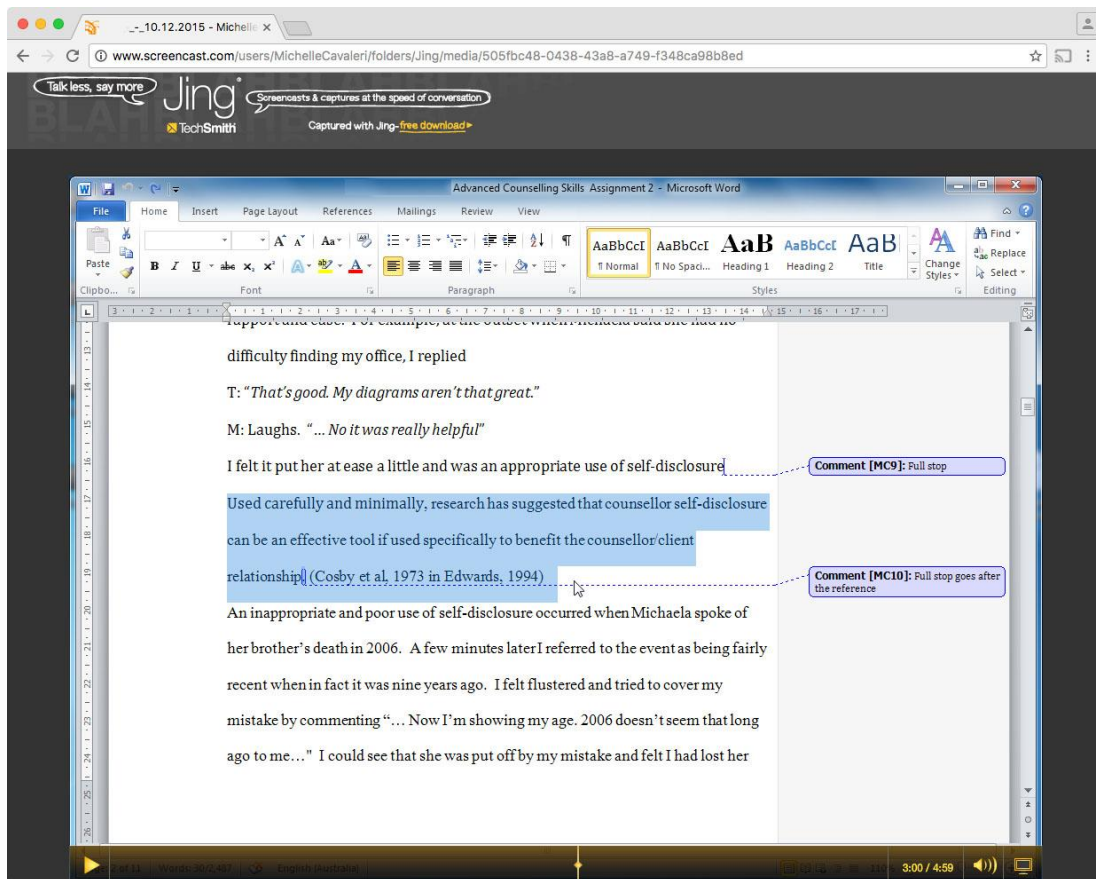


Figure 4. Screen shot of an example of the advisor's video feedback using *Jing*

To counter-balance the influence of the order of different modes of feedback, the participants were randomly assigned to Group A or Group B. The students in Group A received written feedback on the first text they submitted to the advisor, and audio-visual feedback on their second. Conversely, the students in

Group B received audio-visual feedback on their first text and written feedback on their second text. This cross-over design was employed to ensure all students received both modes of feedback by the end of the trimester and to control for order effects. This method was also adopted due to the ethics requirement that one group of participants should not be given what may be, even hypothetically, a 'better' method than the other participating group, and, therefore, may be advantaged as a consequence of the experiment. This cross-over method has been used in other screen-capture video feedback studies (for example, Mathieson, 2012; Silva, 2012). The students allocated to Group A were given participant identification codes starting with 'A', and students allocated to Group B were given participant identification codes starting with 'B' (as shown in Table 1 earlier in this section).

It should also be noted that this study does not include a control group. As this study takes place in a naturalistic setting, that is, the participants are students who have genuinely asked the SLS advisor for feedback on an authentic assignment, it was not possible to ask some of these participants to form a control group and receive no feedback. Moreover, the purpose of the study is not to measure the effectiveness of feedback in general (that is, written or audio-visual feedback versus no feedback), but to compare the effectiveness of two different types of feedback (written and audio-visual).

In total, 80 papers from the 20 student participants were gathered for analysis (40 draft and revised pairs). The information obtained from the draft and revised pairs of papers forms the basis for the overall findings of the study. The types of assignments students sent to the advisor for feedback were academic essays (n = 14), reflective essays (n = 10), laboratory reports (n = 5), summaries (n = 5), learning journals (n = 2), extended responses to questions (n = 2), case studies (n = 1) and reports (n = 1). Having different types of texts strengthened the study as feedback was gauged on a variety of genres according to the specifications of the tasks. Nevertheless, the overall approach and purpose for providing feedback on each of the assignments was the same, namely to facilitate students' language and academic writing skill development and their composing processes.

The students' first drafts with the advisor's written comments and the feedback videos were saved for analysis. The student's name and student identification number were removed from each paper and replaced with a participant identification code (A1, A2, B1, B2 and so on). A separate file containing a key with the participant identification code and student names was kept in order to match the drafts with the revised papers. The next step involved collecting the students' revised papers after responding to the advisor's feedback in order to observe students' incorporations of feedback into their writing. The students emailed the revised draft to the advisor at a time that suited them, usually within a week of receiving the feedback. This second draft was also saved for analysis so that it could be compared with the first draft. The feedback videos were transcribed verbatim by professional transcribers.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaire**

To support the findings of the feedback analysis, a questionnaire was used as the second source of data in this study. The questionnaire aimed to gather perceptual data in order to provide a student perspective on the research questions and help explain the findings of the feedback analysis. The questionnaire was administered to the student participants after they had received both written and audio-visual feedback from the advisor. This allowed for the questionnaires to provide a reflective account of the participants' perceptions of the feedback practices. Using a questionnaire was deemed the most efficient way to gather a large amount of perceptual data in a structured and quantifiable way. Hence, the questionnaire played an important part in the study's methodological design and served as a useful adjunct to the feedback analysis.

A similar questionnaire had been piloted in the researcher's earlier study (Cavaleri, 2012) and the questionnaire was updated using the current study's research questions as the framework for development. The questionnaire asked each of the student participants about their views on the feedback they received

from the advisor and feedback preferences. This information was compared to the data from the feedback analysis.

The questionnaire was created and managed online using *Survey Monkey*, which is a web-based survey service that offers a variety of question types and allows for the automatic collation of the responses. The questionnaire was administered to the 20 student participants in the week after the end of the trimester after all of their major assignments were submitted. An individual email was sent to each of the participants containing a link to the survey. In the email, it was suggested that the student reviewed the two assignments and the feedback they were given, and the assignment with the written feedback was attached to the email and the link to the video feedback pasted into the email. A copy of the email sent can be found in Appendix E.

To address Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2010) claim that questionnaire items are often 'transparent' meaning that "respondents have a fairly good guess at what the desirable/acceptable/expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true" (p. 8), the first page of the survey contained a statement of confidentiality and an explanation that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers (see Appendix F). In addition, students were advised before they began the questionnaire that although their responses are confidential, they are not anonymous. It was explained that the first question will ask their name so that their questionnaire responses could be correlated with their texts.

The questionnaire comprised 14 questions that gathered data on a) students' views and experiences of the written feedback they received, b) students' views and experiences of the video feedback they received, and c) their feedback preferences. In the first section of the questionnaire, students were asked about their views on the written feedback they received, and indicated their level of agreement with a series of statements using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. They were also asked to rate how they felt after receiving the written feedback by marking on a continuum with two semantic differentials on the extremes (for example, 'unmotivated' and 'motivated'). The Likert scaling and semantic differentials

continuum allowed for a more quantifiable analysis. Students were then asked whether they responded to all of the written feedback comments and were asked to identify a reason if they chose not to respond to a/some comments. Finally, in line with best practice survey design (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), the questionnaire also included an open-ended question asking for students' overall opinion of the written feedback they received. This gave the students the opportunity to expand on points that were important to them. Section two mirrored section one, but the focus was on the video feedback the students received. In the last section of the questionnaire, students were asked which type of feedback they preferred and why, and if they had any further comments. The full questionnaire is included in Appendix G.

### **3.5.3 Individual interviews**

Individual interviews with three volunteer students made up the third source of data in this study. The interviews were conducted by the researcher shortly after the questionnaires had been completed and mainly pursued themes that had arisen in questionnaire responses. While the questionnaire data provided information about the students' experience of feedback, the interviews aimed to bring more in-depth individual perspectives to the study, thereby helping to triangulate the data. Therefore, the purpose of the interviews was threefold: (1) to supplement the information obtained from the feedback analysis and questionnaire, (2) to provide additional data to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, and (3) to explore individual students' experiences in depth. In line with the questionnaire and compatible with the study's research questions, questions in the interview focused on the students' views on the feedback they received from the advisor and their feedback preferences.

Interviews were used because this method has the potential to elicit richer descriptions in the student participants' own words and would ideally lead to answers to questions that go beyond the level of surface explanation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As well as giving the researcher an opportunity to clarify statements made in the questionnaires and ask for additional information, the

interviews also gave participants the chance to verbalise their opinions rather than only being able to write them in the questionnaire. This was important, as a fundamental premise of the study is that reading and writing can be challenging for some students.

The follow up to the questionnaires was initially planned to run as online focus groups rather than individual interviews. However, after running one focus group with four participants at the end of trimester 1, several drawbacks were noted. First, logistical difficulties arose from the need to manage conversation on an online environment while attempting to extract data. Second, during some parts of the focus group, 'groupthink' occurred whereby a more talkative student continued to give responses to the question first, and the other three participants simply echoed her comments. Therefore, it was the researcher's belief that the participants would more readily express themselves if they were in a one-on-one interview rather than in a group. Consequently, it was decided that individual interviews would be a more useful data collection method for participants who joined the study in trimester 2 and 3. The focus group was considered a pilot to test the questions and the focus group data was excluded from the study.

At the end of trimester 2 and trimester 3 respectively, the researcher sent individual emails to the participants who had joined the study that term and invited them to participate in an interview. The participants were advised of the purpose and were told that the interview would be held at a time convenient to them and would be held in an online environment (a Blackboard Collaborate 'classroom'). This was because some of the students were online students and located throughout Australia so it was not possible to run the interviews face-to-face. Moreover, the ability to easily record the conversation was another reason for choosing to hold the session in the online classroom. Participants were offered a \$30 Westfield gift card as a token of appreciation for their time. Three participants agreed to take part in an interview (two in term 2, one in term 3). To help with the readability of the findings chapters of this thesis, the three interviewees were given pseudonyms: Kris (Student A3), Heidi (Student B3) and Noora (Student B10). To help recall their experiences, students were

asked to review the written and video feedback they received from the advisor before the interview. To triangulate the data, the interviewees were also asked to discuss specific examples of feedback where possible.

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide prepared in advance. Consistent with Rubin and Rubin's (2011) definition of a semi-structured interview, the researcher had prepared a limited number of questions so that the interview was planned and structured with a logical pacing of topics and questions, but was also flexible and responsive. The overall aim was to achieve an extended conversation between the researcher and interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The researcher's role during the interviews was to raise questions, listen to the responses, prompt for further information, ask for clarifications and answer any questions. The interview questions were as follows:

- What areas/issues do you prefer an advisor to focus on when giving feedback?
- How do you like feedback to be worded/formed?
- What did you think of the written feedback on your assignment?
- What did you think of the video feedback on your assignment?
- In future, which type of feedback would you prefer?

In general, questions in the interview guide were asked first and were often followed by more specific questions to elicit further information. For example, the questions on written and video feedback were followed by more specific questions concerning what the student liked/disliked about it.

The three interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes each. The interviews were recorded in their entirety using the 'record session' function of the online classroom. Before the interviews commenced, the participants were reminded that the discussion would be recorded, but they should speak freely. On completion of the interview, the recording was transcribed verbatim by professional transcribers.

Although interviews have certain strengths, there are also limitations associated with interviewing. The main limitation is that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering; they are the result of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and the context in which they take place (Rubin & Rubin, 2011), and researchers often fail to consider the impact of interviewer identity in their analysis (Mann, 2010). In the case of this study, the researcher/interviewer was also the provider of the feedback to the students, which may have inhibited some of the students' responses. Hence, it is acknowledged here that the interactional context, and in particular the interviewer's identity, may have impacted the interviews. However, it was important for the researcher to interview the students as both parties had a shared and deep understanding of the feedback that was given. It was also stressed to the students that they should speak freely and openly, as the overall purpose of this study is to enhance the way feedback is given and, therefore, their input was very valuable.

The next section describes the data analysis procedures used on the information gathered from the feedback comments and revised drafts, the questionnaires, and the interviews.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

In order to address the research questions, the advisor's feedback and the students' revisions were analysed by means of an analytical framework developed as part of this research project. The questionnaire and interview data were also analysed in light of the findings of the feedback analysis. An important point to note is that the data collected from the feedback analysis, questionnaires and interviews were not analysed until after all of the data collection had been finalised. This was to ensure the researcher was not influenced in any way, particularly when giving feedback to the student participants in trimester 2 and trimester 3. It should also be noted that the analysis of the data is not a neutral process. This is because the analysis is conducted through the lens of the researcher and, therefore, includes the



subjectivity of the researcher. This issue will be discussed in more detail in § 3.7 *Ethical considerations* and § 3.8 *Reliability and validity considerations*. The following sections provide a more in-depth discussion of each phase of data analysis.

### **3.6.1 Feedback analysis**

The advisor's feedback and the students' revisions were analysed using a framework that was developed as part of this research project. The decision to develop a framework was based on an initial review of the literature, which revealed that there were no existing analysis models that suited the purpose of this study. This is because the existing frameworks grew out of second language writing research and had a strong focus on linguistic accuracy and corrective feedback (for example, Ferris, 1997; Ferris et al., 1997), whereas this study has a broader academic literacy focus on feedback that offers scaffolding in the form of suggestions and explanations as well as corrections. In addition, given that there is little research into audio-visual feedback, it was important to capture emergent themes that may go beyond the existing literature. Hence, an inductive approach to analysis was chosen so that the information gained was not limited to preconceived categories, and as a consequence could provide a framework that better represents the data and lead to rich, focused descriptions (Boeije, 2010).

This inductive approach is a version of grounded theory methodology. At the core of grounded theory studies are analytic categories the researcher develops while studying the data rather than applying a preconceived framework (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is most commonly used in qualitative research involving participant observation, interviews and focus groups (Boeije, 2010); however, grounded theory is, in fact, a general methodology that can be used with any data (Glaser, 2008) and is suitable for analysing texts. Well-known feedback researchers such as Dana Ferris and Fiona Hyland have used a similar methodology in their respective feedback research studies (for example, see Ferris, 1997, 2006; Ferris et al., 1997; F.

Hyland, 1998, 2001, 2003; F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Morton et al., 2014; Storch & Tapper, 2000), and this study's methodology is in the tradition of these researchers.

More specifically, the analytical framework was developed through the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method is described by Boeije (2010) as when "groups or categories inductively emerge from the data and are then named or coded ... Through the constant comparison of data with the emerging ideas, a more abstract and conceptual model can be generated that is ground in the data" (p. 88). Initially, some general categories were developed prior to analysing the data based on the feedback literature and on our previous study (Cavaleri, 2012; Cavaleri et al., 2014). Although some grounded theory scholars advise against reviewing the literature before collecting and analysing data in order not to influence the researcher with preconceived ideas (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), an initial literature review was carried out before the data collection. This was necessary in order to learn whether any similar research had already been conducted on this topic and to create the research proposal. Consequently, some general categories were considered prior to analysing the data, but more specific categories inductively emerged from the data using the constant comparative method.

The process of data analysis began by examining a number of student papers to test the categories in the general framework. Each feedback comment and corresponding revision was examined separately and coded for analysis. As the process of coding the comments and revisions proceeded, refinements to the framework were made, and the categories were adjusted to capture the new themes as they emerged. Some codes or concepts shared the same or similar characteristics and were combined. Careful comparisons between feedback comments, as well as between codes and categories were undertaken. After approximately three-quarters of the papers were coded, 'saturation' was reached where no new categories were being created (Boeije, 2010), so the remainder of the papers were analysed according to the finalised scheme. According to Boeije (2010), saturation indicates that an adequate sample size

has been achieved in a grounded theory study; therefore, enough data (student papers) were obtained to confirm the emerging framework.

The analysis of the advisor's feedback and the creation of the framework involved two phases: examining the focus of the feedback (what issues the feedback addressed) and the form of the feedback (how the feedback is expressed). Exploring the 'what' and 'how' helps to capture and represent feedback as a relational phenomenon, which is important given that feedback in this context is viewed as constructing knowledge through social interaction. Therefore, the study's methodological approach and the analytical framework are also underpinned by sociocultural epistemology, with the framework capturing not only the content of the feedback but also the way it is communicated to the student. The human dimensions of the feedback were then able to be analysed, particularly focusing on the sociocultural learning theory concepts of collaboration and scaffolding and the extent to which written and video feedback is congruent with this theoretical approach to learning.

First, the focus of each comment was judged, that is, what issue the comment addressed. By the end of the analysis, six main categories for the feedback focus were identified:

- Content
- Structure and development
- Academic writing style
- Linguistic accuracy
- Formatting
- Greeting and closing.

A more detailed explanation of these categories and their sub-categories is given in *Chapter 4: The effect of mode on the focus of the feedback*.

Second, the form of the comments was categorised, that is how the feedback is expressed in terms of its pragmatic intent and syntactic form. From the analysis, seven main categories for the feedback form were identified:

- Directive

- Model
- Question
- Suggestion
- Explanation
- Praise
- Interpersonal

A more detailed explanation of these categories is given in *Chapter 5: The effect of mode on the form of the feedback*.

If a comment contained more than one form, the comment was counted twice, that is, once for each category. The example below shows a comment containing two forms:

*This is the name of the department, so use a capital "F" and "S"* (Student B1, written feedback)

In this example, the sentence was analysed as one comment with a focus on linguistic accuracy, but with two forms: an explanation (*This is the name of the department*) and a directive (*so use a capital "F" and "S"*) according to the framework. Coding a comment twice was also the approach Ferris et al. (1997) took regarding compound comments.

Some longer comments, particularly with the spoken video feedback, were several sentences long and it was sometimes difficult to determine whether they were one long comment or two separate comments. The example below shows an extended video comment, followed by an explanation of how it was analysed:

(a) *Down a bit further in the paragraph you mention "unconditional positive regard" [highlights "unconditional positive regard" in the paragraph] so if this paragraph is about unconditional positive regard, you need to put this in the very first sentence. (b) So it needs to be in the topic sentence so the reader knows exactly what this paragraph is about. (c) So back up here [circles pointer at the start of the paragraph], you might want to put a sentence that says something like, "One key feature of person-centred counselling is showing*

*unconditional positive regard”, and then you can define it and talk about where its shown in the video. (d) [Scrolls down page] Down here you’ve got in your topic sentence “congruence” [highlights topic sentence], so that’s good; I know that this paragraph is about congruence so that’s fine. (Student B5, video feedback)*

In this example, sentences (a), (b) and (c) were analysed as being one extended comment, and coded as focusing on structure and development, with three forms: directive (a), explanation (b) and model (c). Sentence (d), on the other hand, was analysed as a separate comment (though obviously related to the previous one), as it referred to a different part of the text. It was coded as focusing on structure and development in the form of praise. Ferris et al. (1997) spoke of a similar challenge regarding compound comments and/or long comments, and coders were told to use their best judgment when coding.

The final step of the feedback analysis involved tracking the students’ revisions in response to the comments. This was an important step because for feedback to be considered effective, it must be used by the students to close the feedback ‘loop’ (Jonsson, 2013; Sadler, 1998). Therefore, examining how a student responds to feedback can help reveal how the student engaged in the revising process and indicate how the student understood the feedback. The revisions could involve substantial changes, such as incorporating additional material or restructuring the paper, or might include minor adjustments such as correcting a misspelled word or rearranging a sentence. To assess the effect of the feedback comments on the students’ revised papers, categories for classifying how students revised their texts were developed. From the analysis, four main categories emerged:

- Successful revision
- Unsuccessful revision
- No change
- Deleted text

A more detailed explanation of these categories is given in *Chapter 6: The effect of mode on students’ uptake of the feedback.*

To test the validity of the coding and the resulting framework, the researcher shared samples of coded feedback on four student papers (two had received written feedback and two had received audio-visual feedback) with a work colleague. The initial rate of agreement on the designations was 94%, and discussion of the other six percent of instances resulted in 100% agreement. How specific comments and revisions fit into the categories was discussed and various problems associated with the framework were resolved. The researcher also sought the advice of the research supervisors for approximately 10 feedback comments that were difficult to classify. Through discussion, the researcher and research supervisors were able to agree on all of the designations.

The data and coding according to the abovementioned framework was entered in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The reason for using Excel was that it allowed for formulae to be created to make sense of the data. The quantitative analysis of the data using formulae generated results including how the mode of feedback affects the type of feedback given, how the mode of feedback affects the uptake of feedback, and the differences between students with low ELP and high ELP. A sample of written and video feedback and the corresponding coding is shown in Appendix H.

Finally, a logistic regression analysis was conducted using the statistics software program *R* to test for significant differences between the written and video feedback regarding focus and form. Logistic regression was also used to test for significant differences in successful revision rates between written and video feedback. The effect sizes are presented as odds ratios.

In total, 1040 comments were analysed from 40 draft and revised pairs of papers, of which 20 had received written feedback and 20 had received audio-visual feedback. An overall summary of the data from the feedback analysis is given in Table 2. As mentioned, the audio-visual mode incorporates video feedback and accompanying written comments; hence, 'audio-visual mode' is the superordinate category in Table 2, and 'video feedback' and 'written feedback' are shown as subcategories.

Table 2. Feedback analysis data summary

	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode		
		Video feedback	Written feedback	Total
Total number of feedback comments	527	251	262	513
Average number of feedback comments per	26.4	12.6	12.1	25.7
Average feedback word count per paper	400	945	109	1054
Average number of words per feedback comment	15.1	75	8.4	41
Average length of video		4:58 mins		

### 3.6.2 Questionnaire

Data obtained from the questionnaire was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively for information on students' feedback experiences and preferences. The goal of the analysis was to compare students' perceptions of the written feedback and video feedback they received in terms of:

- the quality, level of detail and usability of the feedback
- how students felt after receiving the feedback in terms of confidence, motivation and clarity
- the reasons for not taking up any of the feedback comments

The quantitative data from questions such as the Likert-scale responses were analysed by comparing the scores for written feedback with the scores for video feedback. The qualitative data collected from the students' responses to the open-ended questions was analysed by conducting a basic thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying, examining and recording patterns or themes within data, and includes identifying both explicit and implicit ideas within the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). In this case, thematic analysis helped to identify common experiences and perceptions among the group of students. In addition, all questionnaire data were examined in light of

feedback analysis findings and the analytical framework. This process of triangulation between data was used to support and help explain the findings of the feedback analysis.

### **3.6.3 Individual interviews**

While the analysis of the open-ended questionnaire data aimed to identify common themes among the students' views, the interview data were analysed with the aim of exploring three students' experiences more specifically. Each of the three interview transcriptions was examined separately. Brief notes and phrases were written beside interview segments that related to the purpose of the study. The analysis particularly focused on identifying segments where the student discussed why they preferred certain types of feedback (such as feedback that focused on grammar or feedback that was formed as a suggestion) and why certain feedback characteristics were important to them (such as hearing the feedback provider's voice). Then, data were triangulated by considering the students' responses in light of the feedback analysis in order to support and help explain the findings.

## **3.7 Ethical considerations**

In any research study, ethical issues relating to informing, honouring and protecting the participants are of vital concern (Rallis & Rossman, 2009). Although it was anticipated that the study would pose no serious ethical threats to the participants, various safeguards were implemented to ensure the protection and rights of participants.

First, the study went through a formal review process and received approval from the Western Sydney University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC approval number H11014) prior to commencement. In addition, the study received approval from the Dean of the college where the study took place, Dr Scott Dickson, and the Head of Student Learning Support at the college, Ms Ellen Cooper.



Second, informed consent was a priority of the study. Informed consent is intended to ensure that the participants have full knowledge of the benefits and the risks of the study, and based on that information, can decide whether to participate (Boeije, 2010). The research process involved enlisting voluntary cooperation, so it was essential that participants were informed about the study's purpose, what participation would involve, and the researcher's role. As mentioned in § 3.4, potential participants were given a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) that fully and clearly outlined the nature of the data collection and the purpose for which the data will be used. It was also made clear to participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without it affecting their relationship with the college's Student Learning Support service. In addition, as Lazaraton (2009) explains, when using written discourse or recorded speech, it is essential to obtain permission from the people who produced the language before analysing it, even if approval has already been given from an institutional review board. Hence, each participant provided written consent to collect and analyse his or her assignments, survey results and recorded speech from the interview (see Appendix C).

Third, the anonymity of the participants was considered of primary importance when choices were made regarding the storing, reporting and dissemination of data. All information including data obtained from the college's records, the feedback analysis, the survey and the interviews was de-identified to maintain students' anonymity. This was accomplished by removing names and student identification numbers and replacing them with participant identification codes 'A1', 'A2' and so on. Participants' names were not attached to the data and only the researcher and researcher's supervisors were able to identify participants by using a separate file containing a key with the participant identification code and student names. Cautionary measures were also taken to securely store the research data, and only the researcher and the researcher's supervisors had access to this information. Data stored on the computer or online were password protected.

Finally, the researcher's own participation in the study was also carefully managed. For methodological and logistical reasons, the researcher was also

the advisor providing the feedback and the interviewer. This raised the potential ethical issues given the given the dual role as educator and researcher (L. Ferguson, Yonge, & Myrick, 2004), such as students feeling apprehensive that negative or critical remarks made about the advisor's feedback or the feedback methods could lead to repercussions. To address this issue, the ethical considerations already discussed in this section helped to safeguard participants, namely informed and voluntary consent, confidentiality of data, and anonymity. In addition, the research supervisors and a colleague who was unconnected to the study provided advice on the research processes and data analysis to ensure integrity and transparency. The goal of the study, that is, to improve feedback practices generally rather than to critique the advisor's feedback specifically, was also made explicit to the students, as participants can often be motivated to join a study if they believe that their experience may help others (Boeije, 2010). The researcher reinforced this point at the start of each of the three individual interviews to create trust and openness by explaining that their honest opinions were crucial to the success of the study. At no point did any of the student participants indicate or express any discomfort regarding the researcher's participation in the study. In sum, the need for research into feedback mode, with the ultimate goal of improving feedback to students, was deemed a worthy motive for conducting the research with the advisor-researcher dual role.

### **3.8 Reliability and validity considerations**

In addition to the abovementioned ethical considerations, reliability and validity concerns were also addressed in the research design. First, the nature of mixed method research is a form of trustworthiness in itself, as the study's conclusions are based on a triangulation of data from different sources which adds to the study's reliability, validity and credibility (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Yin, 2013). Second, the reliability of the data was checked throughout the coding process and from peer review at different stages of the study. Careful records of the coding process were kept and each iteration of the analytical framework was saved as a new document so that the development of the framework was

transparent. To ensure the data were coded objectively, detailed descriptions of each category were included in the analytical framework, and the codes designated to each comment and revision were checked against the framework three times. For external validity, the researcher asked a colleague who had no relationship to the study to review several coded papers and assess the findings and interpretations for consistency (as outlined in § 3.6.1).

To address the validity of the interview and questionnaire, the same open-ended interview questions were used for all participants and the questionnaire was based on a similar one used with success in the researcher's previous study (Cavaleri, 2012). However, the validity and reliability of the findings are limited to the honesty of the participants' responses to the questionnaire and interviews. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) claim that questionnaire items are often 'transparent' meaning that "respondents have a fairly good guess at what the desirable/acceptable/ expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true" (p. 8). To address this, students were made aware that their open and honest opinions were crucial to the success of the study on the first page of the survey, which contained a statement of confidentiality and an explanation that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers (as shown in Appendix F).

Finally, it was important to address the issue of the researcher's own participation in the study. Being a teacher-researcher and examining one's own feedback is quite common in many feedback studies in a wide range of contexts including second language writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Bitchener et al., 2005; Erlam, Ellis, & Batstone, 2013; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009), academic advising (Wilson et al., 2011), postgraduate research supervision (Morton et al., 2014), writing or composition classes (Silva, 2012; Straub, 2000), in higher education more generally (Court, 2014), and in feedback studies investigating screen-capture video (Edwards, Dujardin, & Williams, 2012; Séror, 2012; Silva, 2012). Although examining one's own feedback is a common approach taken in feedback studies, it may induce a Hawthorne effect. The Hawthorne effect, also known as the observer's paradox, refers to the phenomenon whereby people have the tendency to change their

behavior when they know they are being studied (Boeje, 2007). In the context of this study, the advisor was aware that the feedback she was providing may be used as data for the study. However, whether or not a paper would be included in the study was typically not known until after the feedback had been provided, which helped alleviate the Hawthorne effect, because students needed to complete other requirements of the study to be included in the sample. As mentioned earlier, of the 48 students who were invited to participate in the study, less than half ( $n = 20, 41.6\%$ ) gave consent and completed all requirements of the study (that is, they submitted a second paper for feedback and completed the questionnaire). Another issue regarding the researcher's own participation in the study is that the researcher was also the feedback provider and the interviewer. Therefore, the students' questionnaire and interview responses may have been influenced by the dynamics of the advisor-student relationship, resulting in the possibility of the students responding more positively than they would if the researcher were not also the one providing the feedback. Alternatively, participants may have been guarded and therefore less candid in their responses. To address this, as described in the previous paragraph, the researcher made a conscious attempt to create an environment that was conducive to honest and open dialogue.

In addition, it was important that the researcher strived to be as objective as possible to ensure the validity of the research. Alexakos (2015) explains that research is not value-neutral and it is crucial for teacher-researchers to be self-reflexive by acknowledging possible influences and biases. Potential biases may arise due to the background of the researcher, her social position, or from her personal intellectual biases, both conscious and unconscious (Alexakos, 2015). With this study, there may have been some preconceived ideas during the production of the data (that is, the production of the feedback) from the researcher's engagement with the literature and experience as an academic skills advisor. For example, her own beliefs about the particular merits of audio-visual feedback might influence the type and quality of feedback she gave in either mode. Reflexivity involved being aware of this, as well as being aware of the influence of the researcher's multiple positions (as the advisor participating

in the study and as the researcher and interviewer) and her relationship to the student participants. For example, as an advisor, she is professionally and personally invested in seeing positive outcomes for students. There is a risk that this may influence the research and in particular the researcher's response to the data, so it was important for the researcher to remain aware of this when making assumptions and judgements about the data. As mentioned in § 3.6, the data was analysed using a primarily inductive approach. While the analysis was, therefore, data driven, the researcher was 'present' in the process through her subjectivity and choosing to view the data from a sociocultural perspective. The researcher managed these influences as best as she could by being reflexive and critically questioning the research process and the research findings through conversations with a trusted colleague and her research supervisors.

Being a reflexive researcher also means being careful about not stating 'absolute truths' (Alexakos, 2015, p. 21). This was particularly important given that the study's theoretical orientation is based on the premise that learning is socially situated, which means that the study's findings are a product of the specific research setting. Alexakos (2015) argues that doing sociocultural research does not mean searching for 'truths' but does require inquiry that is systematic and mindful, and this kind of reflexive research can provide insightful contributions to the field of education that can lead to improvement of practice and be transformative. Therefore, these findings are not generalised to be 'true' but rather as valuable, contextualised research.

Despite these precautions to maximise reliability and validity, the research has several limitations. A discussion of the study's limitations is given in Chapter 8.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided a detailed description of this study's research methodology. A mixed method research design was employed in order to quantify the effects and explore the perceptions of each mode of feedback. Grounded theory was chosen as a suitable research methodology, and a core component of this study was the development of an analytical framework to

measure the effect of the different modes of feedback. The following chapters present and discuss the findings of the data analysis. Chapter 4 looks at the effect of mode on the focus of the feedback, and Chapter 5 explores the effect of mode on the form of the feedback. Chapter 6 presents the findings related to students' uptake of feedback. Chapter 7 will then outline the results of the student questionnaires and the three student interviews. Each of these chapters will also compare the results of students with low ELP to students with high ELP. The findings are also discussed in relation to the literature on feedback and previous research studies.

# Chapter 4

## The effect of mode on the focus of the feedback

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings related to the effect of mode on the *focus* of the feedback, which addresses research question 1. The focus of the feedback refers to the types of issues the advisor addressed when giving feedback. As described in Chapter 3, the focus areas were identified through an inductive approach using grounded theory methods, whereby the feedback comments were coded, categorised and organised into an explanatory framework. The six main focus areas that emerged are as follows:

- Content
- Structure and development
- Academic writing style
- Linguistic accuracy
- Formatting
- Greeting and closing

Table 3 provides a detailed description of these categories and their sub-categories.

The following sections in this chapter present the findings regarding the effect of mode on the focus of the feedback and discuss the findings in relation to the literature. Some relevant quotes from the students' questionnaires and interviews are included in this chapter; however, the majority of the questionnaire and interview findings are provided in Chapter 7. The three interviewees were given pseudonyms: Kris (student A3), Heidi (student B3), and Noora (student B10).

Table 3. Analytical framework for classifying the focus of the feedback

<b>Feedback focus</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Content	Content quality and scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation of the assignment task</li> <li>• Coverage of the topic</li> <li>• Clarity of argument/purpose</li> </ul>
	Source material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of source material</li> <li>• Relevance and quality of source material</li> </ul>
Structure and development	Overall structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure and sectioning of the text</li> <li>• Grouping and ordering of ideas</li> </ul>
	Paragraph and sentence development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the paragraph</li> <li>• Order of information within the paragraph</li> <li>• Cohesive devices</li> </ul>
Academic writing style	Referencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of sources</li> <li>• APA referencing conventions</li> </ul>
	Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline terminology</li> <li>• Formality</li> <li>• Objectivity</li> <li>• Conciseness</li> </ul>
Linguistic accuracy	Punctuation and spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuation</li> <li>• Spelling</li> <li>• Capitalisation</li> </ul>
	Lexis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word choice</li> </ul>
	Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure</li> <li>• Subject/verb agreement</li> <li>• Verb tense</li> <li>• Articles</li> </ul>
Formatting	Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formatting requirements</li> <li>• Microsoft Word formatting tools</li> </ul>
Greeting and closing	Greeting and closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greeting and introducing self</li> <li>• Thanking for contacting</li> <li>• Inviting contact</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Findings

The results show that the focus of the advisor’s feedback varied depending on the mode of feedback. Table 4 presents the number of comments for each focus area for each mode of feedback, as well as what percentage these comments formed out of the total number of comments given for each mode. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the papers that received video feedback also received accompanying written comments, so the superordinate category ‘audio-visual feedback mode’ is used in Table 4, with ‘video feedback’ and ‘written feedback’



provided as subcategories. Note that the percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding; this note also applies to all tables in the findings chapters. A further breakdown of the findings into the focus area sub-categories is given in Appendix I.

Table 4. Instances of feedback according to feedback focus

Feedback focus	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode		
		Video feedback	Written feedback	Total
Content	32 (6%)	36 (14%)	7 (3%)	43 (8%)
Structure and development	67 (13%)	48 (19%)	8 (3%)	56 (11%)
Academic writing style	182 (35%)	78 (31%)	69 (26%)	147 (29%)
Linguistic accuracy	242 (46%)	36 (14%)	173 (66%)	209 (41%)
Formatting	4 (1%)	15 (6%)	5 (2%)	20 (4%)
Greeting and closing	0 (0%)	38 (15%)	0 (0%)	38 (7%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	527	251	262	513

Although a large portion of the comments addressed academic writing style with both written and video of feedback, there was an overall shift in focus from linguistic accuracy with written feedback to content and text structure with video feedback. The top three focus areas with written-only feedback mode were linguistic accuracy (46%), academic writing style (35%), and structure and development (13%). With the video feedback, the top three focus areas were academic writing style (31%), structure and development (19%), and greeting and closing (15%). The largest discrepancies were in the categories of linguistic accuracy (written feedback 46%, video feedback 14%) and greeting and closing (written feedback 0%, video feedback 15%). The differences in feedback focus were smaller when comparing the written feedback to the video feedback plus the accompanying written comments (that is, the ‘Total’ column of Table 4), with differences of no more than 7% in all focus area categories.

A logistic regression analysis was conducted using the data from the 'written feedback mode' and 'video feedback' columns in Table 4 to measure effect size and the results are shown in Figure 5 (note that the y-axis is on the log scale). An odds ratio greater than 1 indicates that particular focus area is more likely to occur in video feedback, relative to a content focused comment. As shown, comments focused on formatting were 3.333 times more likely with video feedback, which was statistically significant ( $p = 0.049$ ). The analysis also indicated that the odds of feedback focusing on academic writing style or linguistic accuracy were more likely with written feedback and these were statistically significant (academic writing style  $p = 0.0005$ ; linguistic accuracy  $p < 0.0001$ ). Feedback on structure and development was also more likely to occur with written feedback; however, the difference was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.14$ ).

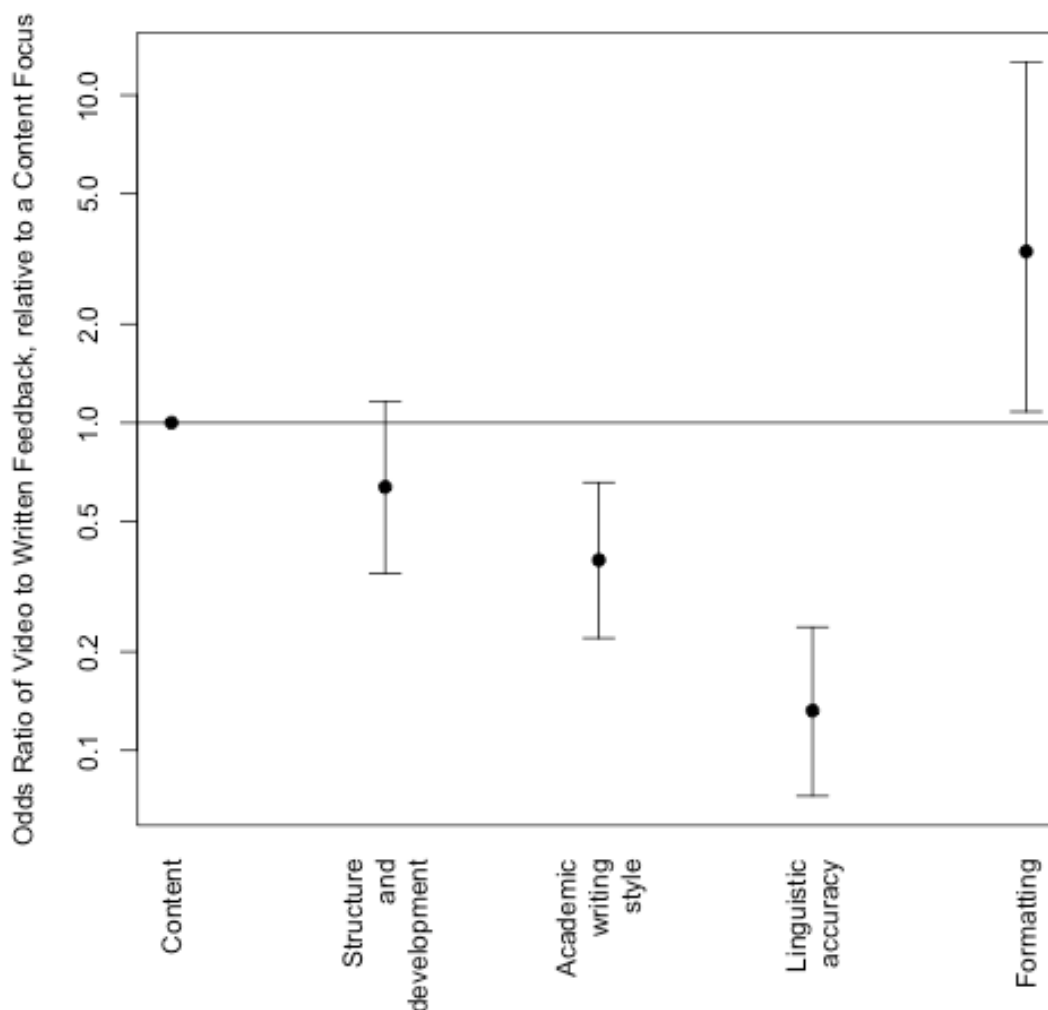


Figure 5. Odds ratios of video to written feedback, relative to a 'Content' focus

### 4.3 Findings in relation to student proficiency level

The results were further analysed to see whether there were any differences in focus between students with different levels of ELP. The results of the students with the five highest MASUS scores (students A3, A6, B3, B4 and B8) and the five lowest MASUS scores (students A1, A8, B1, B2 and B10) were isolated for comparison. Table 5 shows the distribution of comments between each group of students. Note that these findings represent video feedback only and not the accompanying written comments in order to present the data clearly and illuminate key differences.

The advisor maintained a similar feedback focus between both groups, with the exception of structure and development and academic writing style with video feedback; 30% of video comments focused on structure and development for students with low ELP compared to 11% for students with high ELP, and 22% of video comments focused on academic writing style for students with low ELP compared to 34% for students with high ELP.

Table 5. Differences in feedback focus between student proficiency level and mode of feedback

Feedback focus	Written feedback		Video feedback	
	Low ELP	High ELP	Low ELP	High ELP
Content	9 (6%)	7 (6%)	7 (12%)	9 (13%)
Structure & development	8 (6%)	15 (13%)	18 (30%)	8 (11%)
Academic writing style	50 (35%)	39 (33%)	13 (22%)	24 (34%)
Linguistic accuracy	74 (52%)	55 (47%)	10 (17%)	15 (21%)
Formatting	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (5%)	5 (7%)
Greeting and closing	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (15%)	10 (14%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	142	118	60	71

### 4.4 Discussion

As described in § 4.2, the results revealed that the mode of feedback influenced the focus of the feedback, that is, the kind of issues the advisor addressed in her

comments. However, there was less variation when comparing the written-only feedback to the video feedback plus the accompanying written comments (that is, the 'Total' column in Table 4). This suggests that incorporating video feedback does not completely change the focus of the advisor's feedback; instead, it indicates that some focus areas might be more suited to video feedback (content, structure, formatting, and greeting and closing) whereas comments focused on linguistic accuracy appear to be more suited to written feedback, and feedback on academic writing style is suited to either mode. More specifically, the findings revealed three main trends:

- With written feedback, there was a greater focus on linguistic accuracy issues such as grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice problems, whereas with video feedback, there was a higher proportion of comments related to content and text structure issues.
- There were greeting and closing 'moves' with video feedback that did not exist with written feedback.
- There were significantly more comments focused on formatting with video feedback.

A visual representation of these shifts between written and video feedback is shown in Figure 6. These three key findings are discussed in the following subsections.

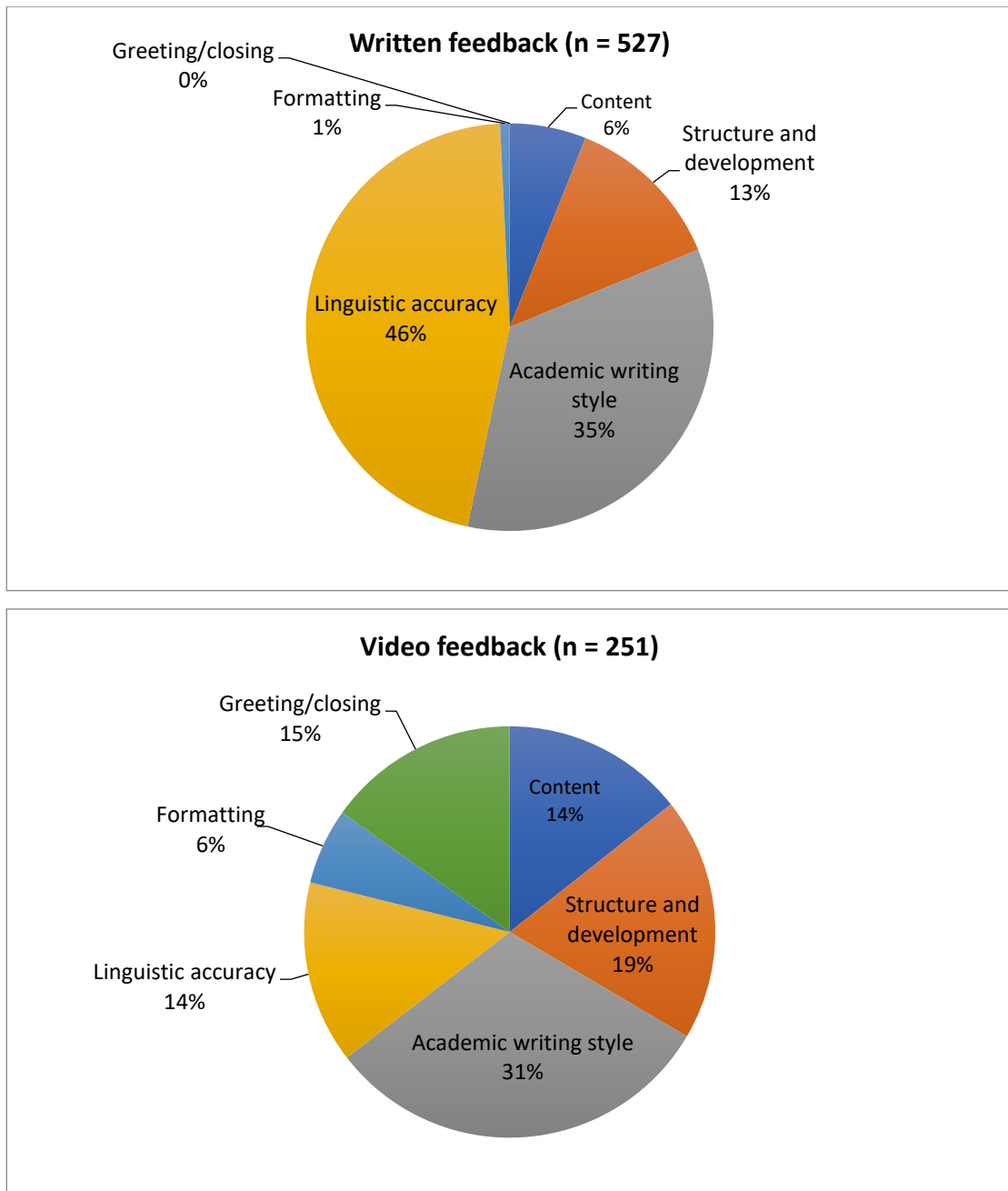


Figure 6. Advisor's feedback according to feedback focus

#### **4.4.1 The shift in focus from local to global issues**

As shown in Figure 6, the most noteworthy difference between feedback modes is that 46% of written-only feedback focused on issues regarding linguistic accuracy, compared to 14% of the video feedback. Examples of written comments focusing on linguistic accuracy are shown in (1) and (2).

- (1) *Use a comma after linking words at the start of a sentence.* (Written feedback focused on linguistic accuracy given to student B5)
- (2) *Some words are missing from this sentence – Who has been subjected to homelessness?* (Written feedback focused on linguistic accuracy given to student A1)

With video feedback, the focus shifted to global issues relating to content (6% of the written comments compared to 14% of the video comments) and structure and development (13% of the written comments compared to 19% of the video comments). Examples of video comments focused on content and structure and development are shown below in (3) and (4) respectively. The phrases in square parentheses describe the advisor's on-screen actions captured in the video. Quotation marks are used to indicate that the text was spoken.

- (3) *“Do make sure that you’ve actually got literature in each paragraph [circles a paragraph with the pointer] because you will notice, I think it’s only maybe strength number one and strength number three [scrolls to body paragraph 3] that you’ve linked to literature. But I think for the other three, you haven’t actually linked them to the literature which is a bit of a problem, because it’s one of the criteria.”* (Video feedback focused on content given to student A8)
- (4) *“So one of the main things that I noticed with your paper is the length of the paragraphs. As you can see this second one here [highlights the second paragraph] is actually only one sentence so it is a very short paragraph and to be honest, it actually isn’t a paragraph because a paragraph should have at least a couple of sentences that has a main idea that then gets developed. So what you’ll need to do is go through your paper and start to chunk the information into longer paragraphs. So as an example, this paragraph here [highlights first few words of paragraph] is sort of giving a bit of an overview of the history of the issue, but so is this one and this one [highlights second and third paragraphs] - this is actually a continuation of that idea of, you know, how*

*homelessness has developed over time. So that actually should be as one paragraph that needs to go together [circles cursor over second and third paragraphs].” (Video feedback focused on structure and development given to student B1).*

This shift in focus between written and video feedback was also reported by Cavaleri et al. (2014) as well as Elola and Oskoz (2016), who found that teachers provided more commentary on content, structure, and organisation when using screen-capture software compared to when giving written feedback. Based on his experience, Stannard (2012) proposed that video feedback was better suited to providing explanatory comments on content and structure rather than for simply correcting spelling and grammar, and the current study has provided evidence that this does, in fact, seem to be the case.

There could be several explanations for this shift in focus from local issues with written feedback to global issues with video feedback. One explanation relates to the approach for addressing linguistic accuracy issues with each mode. When giving written feedback, the advisor typically made a comment each time there was an issue with linguistic accuracy. In other words, if a student made the same error several times throughout the paper, the advisor would usually comment on each instance. In contrast, with video feedback, comments focused on linguistic accuracy typically identified the most prevalent issue(s) and explained why it was an issue; however, the advisor did not identify each and every instance of the issue in the video. An example of this approach is given in (5).

- (5) *“The other thing I noticed, I’m just going to scroll down [scrolls down], just with your use of colons, so there’s a couple here [circles the pointer]. Colons aren’t really used in the way that you’ve used them. They’re used when you have a sentence and then you’re introducing, say, a list. But if you’ve got two full sentences like here [highlights sentences], it’s actually better to use a semi-colon. So a semi-colon functions more like a full stop, but it shows that the sentences on either side are actually closely related, so they’re talking about the same point for example. A colon is not really*

*used in that way. Have a think about that – there are a few of them in your paper where it would be better to either change it to a semi-colon, or perhaps even a full stop.*“ (Video feedback focused on linguistic accuracy given to student A3).

As illustrated in this example, when giving video feedback, the advisor tended to make the student aware of a linguistic issue and identify one example in the text, rather than commenting on each instance. The written comments that accompany the video are still largely focused on linguistic accuracy (as shown in Table 4). This suggests that feedback on linguistic issues is generally more suited to a written comment than a verbal comment. One theory for this is that providing a written comment at that point of the text can help lower potential textual barriers and act as a contextualisation cue, which is crucial in writing (Sindoni, 2014). In other words, a margin comment about a specific linguistic issue makes it clear which part of the text the comment refers to, as students in Mathieson (2012) and Wolsey’s (2008) study attested. It may also be because writing tends to be less subjective and more direct than speech (Berman, 2015; Nassaji, 2015), which suits the type of feedback given on linguistic errors, such as the examples of feedback given previously in (1) and (2). These two reasons are likely to have contributed to significantly more feedback on linguistic accuracy issues being given in writing.

Another explanation for the shift in focus from local to global issues is the differences in the amount of feedback that can be given in writing versus speech. As discussed in § 2.4.4, more information can typically be given in speech than in writing in the same amount of time (Lunt & Curran, 2010), and in addition to this, the written feedback in this study is constrained by the physical limitations of the Microsoft Word ‘Comment’ bubbles that sit in the margins of the document. Therefore, teachers may focus on lower-order problems when giving written feedback instead of higher-order issues as these are most easily expressed in short snippets of text (Anson, 2015). In contrast, video gives teachers the opportunity to give verbal feedback without the physical limits of writing only in the page margin. This may prompt them to address more complex issues that require lengthier feedback, such as the



organisation of a text and content-related issues. This contrast can be seen when looking at the written comments on linguistic issues shown earlier in (1) and (2) which are short sentences, whereas the video comments on content and structure in (3) and (4) exemplify the expanding, intricate development of clause complexes typical of speech (Halliday, 1989). In addition, the visual element of the video allows teachers to discuss the document as a whole more easily as they can move from one section to another by scrolling to match the flow of the speech. For example, in the video feedback given to student B5, the advisor highlighted the signposting sentence in the introduction, then scrolled through the student's essay to show her that the body paragraphs were not presented in the same order that was suggested in the signposting sentence. The student found this very helpful, as indicated by her questionnaire response shown in (6):

(6) *The video was particularly useful to understand the structure of my essay due to having my work in front of me and being shown the link between the different parts.* (Questionnaire response from student B5)

Another explanation for the differences in focus with written and video feedback somewhat counters this argument; rather than being attributed to the constraints of writing in the page margins, the differences in focus could instead be attributed to the constraints of the five-minute video recording limit. The five-minute limit forces the advisor to prioritise the feedback thereby focusing on the most salient issues, which may explain the greater focus on content and structure issues. According to Borg and Deane (2011), global issues tend to have the biggest effect on a student's mark as they reflect the student's understanding of the material and of the assessment task. Harper et al. (2012) came to a similar conclusion; while some teachers in their study initially had doubts about what they could achieve in five minutes, they found that the time restriction was beneficial as it made them focus on the most pertinent issues of the paper and not on every single mistake. Several other researchers suggest that five minutes is ideal in order to be educationally effective (Bond, 2009; Harper et al., 2012; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008), and a reason underpinning this argument could be that it keeps the comments

focused on the main issues. This point about prioritising issues to focus on is also linked to the differences in the overall process of composing the feedback in each mode. When given written feedback, the advisor is reading and commenting on a student's paper line-by-line or section-by-section. With this method, linguistic issues might be easier to identify and comment on than more abstract, global issues. With audio-visual mode, the advisor adds a few written comments while reading the student's paper, and after reading the whole text, writes a few notes in point form as cues for the video and then records the video. Therefore, the advisor has the opportunity to reflect on the paper holistically before composing the video. This might encourage deeper thought and more comments about content and structure issues that perhaps would not have been considered when giving written feedback and, therefore, could help explain the shift to a higher proportion of comments on global issues when giving video feedback.

The differences in focus with written feedback and video feedback could benefit students in a number of ways. Because video feedback has a greater emphasis on content and structure, it addresses Meyer and Niven (2007) and Straub's (2000) recommendation to prioritise giving comments on global concerns such as content and organisation before addressing style and correctness. Straub (2000) argues that this stresses to the student the importance of content and thought, and it indicates to the student that what they have to say is valued. Although ALL advisors are usually not discipline experts and feedback on content is typically kept to a minimum, comments on content are often, if not always, intertwined with other academic writing issues (Coffin et al., 2005). Therefore, video comments that address basic content matters in line with the descriptions given in Table 3 (such as the interpretation of the assignment task and the inclusion of relevant source material) are important areas of feedback for advisors to give without crossing the line into areas that require disciplinary expertise, particularly for first-year students who are learning the ways of writing and constructing knowledge in academia (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2012; Woodward-Kron, 2004).

In addition, the increased focus on structure with video feedback appears to particularly benefit students with low language proficiency. As shown earlier in Table 5, structure and development was the focus area with the biggest differences between proficiency levels. Interestingly, 30% of the video comments to students with low ELP were related to structure and development, compared to 11% of the comments to students with high ELP. An example of one of these comments to a student with low ELP was given previously as example (4). This difference between the groups suggests that students with low ELP might have more difficulty with issues such as choosing an organisational structure appropriate to the text's purpose, grouping ideas, presenting ideas in a logical order and using signposts. However, only 6% of the written comments to the group of students with low ELP focused on structure and development compared to 13% for the group with higher proficiency, which suggests the opposite. Nevertheless, because the students with low ELP had lengthy, detailed video feedback on structure (such as the example given in (4)), what actually might be the case is that feedback about these often complicated issues can be articulated more easily in spoken form where complex and expanded information tends to be provided (Halliday, 1989). Therefore, providing spoken recorded feedback can be particularly helpful for students with weaker language proficiency who have problems with structure.

Using video to discuss linguistic accuracy issues can also help advisors provide feedback that better aligns with the philosophy and theoretical orientation of ALL support. As discussed in § 2.3.5, the role of an advisor is not to proofread and edit students' work. While comments on linguistic accuracy issues may be suited to written comments in the margin, the risk of providing *only* these types of comments is that the advisor can get caught up in editing and correcting. This, in turn, is unlikely to develop a student's understanding of the linguistic issue being addressed (Truscott, 1996). Instead, ALL advisors aim to provide feedback that scaffolds a student's own understanding so that students can be at the centre of the writing and revising process, an approach which is congruent with sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Morton et al., 2014). Incorporating video feedback may be a way to achieve this aim as verbal

explanations about grammar and punctuation rules can easily be provided, such as in the example shown previously in (5), which can help the student construct their own understanding of the issue in the context of their writing. In other words, it can help turn the feedback from ‘giving’ corrections on linguistic errors which reflects a cognitivist perspective (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017) into scaffolding students’ understanding about language, with the overall goal of helping students learn strategies for identifying and amending linguistic issues in their writing.

Another benefit of the shift in focus is the decreased emphasis on linguistic accuracy issues with audio-visual mode, which may overshadow more important feedback. Storch and Tapper (2000) argue that an imbalance of many comments on sentence structure issues but few on content matters could be misleading for students. As discussed, almost half of the comments in written-only mode focused on linguistic accuracy issues, whereas the focus of the video feedback was more evenly spread in its coverage of different aspects of writing (as shown in Figure 6). This gives students a more holistic view of the paper; rather than reading, arguably, less important but frequent written comments addressing every error, which is overwhelming for many students and in particular lower proficiency students (Lee, 2014), with video feedback, the advisor has some control over what students focus on and can help students see connections across the paper. This was noticed by one of the interviewees, Kris, who says he liked how the video feedback helped him find ‘themes’ in the feedback:

(7) *“[It] really helped just to kind of display the themes, I guess or the common mistakes that I was making. It kind of highlighted them, which is something that I would have missed ... because I don’t really have all the comments in mind as I read through. I’m just going one by one. And so that was obviously great.”* (Excerpt from Kris’ interview)

In addition, the spoken mode can better articulate to students the relative importance of the different issues addressed in the feedback. For example, in the video feedback shown earlier in (3), the advisor’s language and intonation

indicated that the problem related to content was critical and needed to be addressed by the student (the underline indicates the words that were stressed by the advisor): “Do make sure that you’ve actually got literature in each paragraph ... [Its] is a bit of a problem, because it’s one of the criteria”. The video comment shown in (4) also clearly indicated to the student that her problem with paragraph structure was quite important, shown through the advisor’s choice of language and intonation: “What you’ll need to do is go through your paper and start to chunk the information into longer paragraphs ... So that actually should be as one paragraph that needs to go together [circles cursor over second and third paragraphs]”. The example of video feedback shown in example (5) addressed the use of colons versus semi-colons, and again, the language and intonation helped to indicate the ‘level’ of significance of the issue: “Colons aren’t really used in the way that you’ve used them .... Have a think about that – there are a few of them in your paper where it would be better to either change it to a semi-colon, or perhaps even a full stop”. Here the advisor indicates the relative unimportance of the correct use of colons and semi-colons, when compared with the video comments shown in (3) and (4) which tend to use stronger language. This shows the power of typical features of speech such as qualifiers and hedges (*actually, a bit, should, really, perhaps*) as well as prosodic features such as intonation which help create meaning and convey information such as the speaker’s feelings and attitudes (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014). It may be harder to articulate the relative level of importance in writing, as shown in the written comments in (1) and (2) which are simple statements/questions.

Nevertheless, as discussed, a written comment about a specific linguistic issue in the margin at that point of the text makes it clear which part of the text the comment refers to (Mathieson, 2012; Wolsey, 2008). In the questionnaires and interviews, several students indicated that they preferred explicit written feedback for straightforward linguistic accuracy issues (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). Therefore, video feedback would be most useful as a complement to these types of written comments by focusing the student’s attention on the most important or most common linguistic issues and providing spoken and visual reinforcement of the written feedback.

#### **4.4.2 The shift in greeting and closing comments**

Another difference in the feedback focus was in the amount of greeting and closing comments, from zero with written feedback, to 38 with video feedback (making up 15% of the video comments). This category of comments refers to greeting and closing statements made within the annotations of a student's paper or within the video. It excludes the email that students receive along with the feedback, which typically says something like: *Dear [student's name], I've provided some feedback on your paper on the attached document and in a short video: [video link]. Please feel free to call or email me if you have any questions about any of my comments. Warm regards, Michelle.* This email was excluded from the feedback analysis as students received it regardless of the mode of feedback. When students received the written feedback, they would open the Word document attached to the email and the comments would be listed in the margin with no additional greeting or closing. On the other hand, the video feedback started with the advisor greeting the student by name, introducing herself, thanking the student for their email, and explaining that the video will discuss some of the feedback. An example of this is given in (8).

- (8) *"Hi [name], it's Michelle here from Student Learning Support. Thanks for sending your paper through. I've taken a look at it and I've put a few comments down the side and attached it to the email. I'll run through the rest of the feedback in this video in a little bit more detail."* (Video greeting given to student B3)

The advisor would usually conclude the video by wishing the student good luck and inviting them to make contact if they had any questions. An example of this is given in (9).

- (9) *"Feel free to give me a call or send me an email if you have any questions and good luck revising your paper."* (Video closing given to student A10)

These opening and closing moves are clearly a product of the spoken mode; that is, the greeting and closing statements exist because the feedback is spoken and

thus mimics the natural structure of a conversation. This supports Berman's (2015) argument that even monologic spoken texts are more interactive and communicatively oriented than written texts. These types of spoken greeting and closing comments may account for why teachers and students in other studies perceive video feedback as conversational and like having a face-to-face discussion (Anson, 2015; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2012; Harper et al., 2015; N. Jones et al., 2012; Séror, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Students in the current study also had similar perceptions; in the questionnaire, one student wrote that, "Watching the video was like the person who supported me was in front of me" (Student B5). This is interesting because the videos are asynchronous and, therefore, not a live dialogue but elements such as greeting and closing statements clearly give a sense of being interactive.

Greeting and closing remarks could also explain why students in some studies felt that the teacher invested effort into reading and evaluating their work and cared about their learning (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Hope, 2011; Turner & West, 2013). These communicatively oriented 'moves' typical of speech contribute to the more involved and interpersonal tone of the feedback. Anson (2015) speculated that this affective benefit could be particularly important for online students who typically feel more distant from the teacher, and video feedback could increase the sense of the teacher's presence. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees, Kris, who is an online student. He explained having a connection to the college and to staff was very important, and he felt that audio-visual feedback bridged that gap:

(10) *"It's actually very discouraging being an online student. Because you kind of - you don't - you're just so disconnected from everyone. And you've just got so much text you're reading through. And also, sometimes you're even like, "I'm not even a real student. I don't actually go to school." ... And so to have someone ... hearing their voice, hearing the educator, hearing the picture. And just even acknowledging the fact that oh, you know - the educator has actually put in the time and effort to teach me this stuff. It actually feels, I guess, almost like a chat. So for online students, absolutely it's so nice to have."* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

Both Kris' observation and the abovementioned explanation related to the differences in speech and writing highlight that the greeting and closing comments make the feedback more communicative and social. Of course, greeting and closing comments could also be provided when giving written feedback; in fact, as mentioned, the advisor in this study did write an email to students when giving feedback in either mode with greeting and closing statements like those given in the video, such as greeting the student by name and inviting the student to make contact if they have any questions. Because these statements were reinforced verbally in the video, they appear to be more 'noticeable' and may explain why students perceive the recorded spoken feedback as like being in a conversation. This is significant given that creating a dialogue around learning is considered good feedback practice (Meyer & Niven, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Straub, 2000), yet can be difficult to achieve when the feedback is given asynchronously.

The closing comments may also have given students a sense of agency in the revising process. At the end of all of the videos, the advisor wished the student luck with revising their paper in her closing comments. As advocated by the Vygotskian view of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978), this positions the student at the centre of the revising process and also signals that the paper has not already been revised or "fixed up" by the advisor; instead, the advisor is indicating that the student has been provided with scaffolding to make his or her own revisions based on the feedback.

In summary, the nature of the greeting and closing moves means that in comparison with written feedback, the spoken video feedback contains more communicatively oriented statements. These contribute to the interpersonal tone of the spoken feedback and can be quite powerful as they simulate a dialogue, increase the feeling of personalisation, and help the students feel that the advisor has paid attention to their work.



#### **4.4.3 The shift in formatting comments**

The final noteworthy difference in focus between written and video feedback was the number of formatting comments (written feedback, n = 4 (1%); video feedback, n= 15 (6%)). A possible explanation for this difference is that screen-capture video allows for visual demonstrations that are ‘talked through’ by the advisor. For example, most of the 15 video comments regarding formatting explained and demonstrated to students how to use a formatting tool in Microsoft Word, such as how to change the line spacing or how to create a hanging indent. An example of this type of video comment is shown in (11).

(11) *“The final thing you need to do with your reference list, once you’ve done all that, is you need to indent the second and third line of each reference. So the easiest way to do this is to highlight the whole reference list [highlights the reference list] and go up to the ruler at the top here [moves pointer to the ruler] and you’ve got two triangles and a little square, a little rectangle. So you want to grab that bottom triangle and it says ‘hanging indent’ [‘hanging indent’ bubble pops up] and move it across to ‘1’ [moves the ruler across to 1]. And you’ll see now that it’s actually indented this for you [moves the pointer up and down the reference list to show indent] but the first line it still at the margin. So that is according to APA style. That is indenting. So I’ll let you do that - I’ll undo it and let you do that. [clicks undo]”* (Video feedback focused on formatting given to student A1)

This kind of audio-visual demonstration is not possible with the written mode of feedback. It can be difficult to comment on formatting issues that require lengthy written ‘how-to’ explanations, but the affordances of screen-capture video allowed the advisor to easily verbally describe and visually model how to adjust the formatting. Thus, the spoken feedback, image on screen and movement that is captured all contribute to the meaning-making process (Sindoni, 2014). This audio-visual approach has benefits for students; according to multimedia learning theory, because the feedback combines the use of both visual and aural channels, it can help minimise the cognitive load on

one channel and enhance the effectiveness of the feedback more than if it were presented in writing only (Clark & Mayer, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). Students found the visual demonstrations related to formatting useful, as illustrated by the following comments from the survey:

(12) *Great to have a visual and audio version, especially with regard to page set up.* (Questionnaire response from student A2)

(13) *The video feedback I also found quite reassuring, as I was shown with the mouse what or where to change things, I'm not very tech savvy so even simple things that were included like changing the margins of my reference list was something I would have had no idea on how to do it!* (Questionnaire response from student B1)

As well as being helpful for the task at hand, the visual demonstrations on formatting are likely to 'feed-forward' and benefit students in the longer term with other assignments, as correct APA formatting is included in all assessment marking criteria at the college. Further discussion about feedback that models processes is given in *Chapter 5: The effect of mode on the form of the feedback*.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings related to the effect of mode on the focus of the feedback, that is, the kind of issues the advisor addressed in her comments. The analytical framework identified six main focus areas of the advisor's feedback: (1) content, (2) structure and development, (3) academic writing style, (4) linguistic accuracy, (5) formatting and (6) greeting and closing. The results show that there was an overall shift in focus from linguistic accuracy with written feedback to content and structure with video feedback. This can be attributed to comments on linguistic issues being more suited to being addressed in writing, which tends to be less subjective and more direct. In addition, written comments can be placed on the page next to the part of the text being discussed, which can help lower textual barriers. Content and structure issues were more suited to being addressed verbally as speech allows

for more intricate and 'flowing' language. The findings revealed that video feedback included greeting and closing remarks that did not exist with the written feedback, and this is likely to be due to the communicatively oriented nature of speech. The audio-visual component is likely to have contributed to the higher number of formatting comments with video feedback. These shifts in focus with video feedback can help align feedback with good practice principles, such as prioritising higher-order issues and turning feedback into a conversation, and can also lead to feedback practices that better suit the sociocultural theoretical orientation of ALL support.

# Chapter 5

## The effect of mode on the form of the feedback

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the effect of mode on the feedback *focus*, that is, what types of issues the comments addressed. This chapter presents and discusses the findings on the effect of mode on the feedback *form*, thereby addressing research question 2. The feedback form refers to the pragmatic intent and the syntactic form of the comments, or put more simply, how feedback is expressed. A framework for analysing the form of the feedback was developed from the data, and the categories that emerged are as follows:

- Directive
- Model
- Question
- Suggestion
- Explanation
- Praise
- Interpersonal
- Other

Table 6 provides a detailed description of these categories and their sub-categories.

The following sections present the findings related to the effects of mode on the form of the feedback and discuss the findings in relation to the literature. As with the previous chapter, some relevant quotes from the students' questionnaires and interviews are included in this chapter.

Table 6. Analytical framework for classifying the form of the feedback

<b>Form</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example</b>
Directive	An instruction is given or a correction is supplied	<i>Write this word in full.</i>
Model	A model sentence, an example, or a demonstration of how to do something is provided	<i>If you click on the line spacing button like this, you can select double spacing.</i>
Question	A question is asked to clarify meaning or prompt thinking/ action	<i>Did you get this information from a source?</i>
Suggestion	A suggestion, advice or a link to a recommended resource is given	<i>This paragraph might be better earlier in the essay.</i>
Explanation	An explanation about why a change is needed, why/how something was done well, or a metalinguistic explanation is given	<i>This is a run-on sentence, which means there are several sentences put together incorrectly as one.</i>
Praise	Positive reinforcement is given	<i>Your reference list is spot on!</i>
Interpersonal	A comment intended to show engagement, build rapport, reassure, or invite contact is provided	<i>Referencing can be tricky, so let me know if you have any questions 😊</i>
Other	Comment not elsewhere classified	<i>A bit confusing...</i>

## 5.2 Findings

The results show that the form of the advisor’s feedback varied depending on the mode of feedback. Table 7 presents the number of comments for each feedback form with each mode of feedback, as well as what percentage these comments comprised out of the total number of comments given for each mode. Many of the feedback comments included two (or occasionally three) feedback forms; therefore, such comments were coded as multiple forms. For example, one comment was written in the following way: *This is the name of the department, so use a capital “F” and “S”*, and was coded as both an explanation and directive. Consequently, the totals given in Table 7 are higher than the totals given in Table 4 in the previous chapter.

Table 7. Instances of feedback according to feedback form

Feedback form	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode		
		Video feedback	Written feedback	Total
Directive	373 (49%)	78 (17%)	230 (77%)	308 (41%)
Model	82 (11%)	57 (12%)	9 (3%)	66 (9%)
Question	67 (9%)	4 (1%)	13 (4%)	17 (2%)
Suggestion	68 (9%)	77 (17%)	9 (3%)	86 (11%)
Explanation	129 (17%)	138 (30%)	24 (8%)	162 (21%)
Praise	25 (3%)	53 (11%)	4 (1%)	57 (8%)
Interpersonal	13 (2%)	53 (11%)	4 (1%)	57 (8%)
Other	5 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	4 (1%)	5 (<1%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>758</b>

Written and video feedback differed considerably regarding the feedback form. The most common forms among the written-only feedback were directive (49%), explanation (17%), and model (11%). The most frequent forms of video comments were explanation (30%), then directive and suggestion (both at 17%). The most noteworthy differences were in the proportion of directives (written mode 49%, video mode 17%) and explanations (written mode 17%, video mode 30%). It was also apparent that with both modes there was a deficiency of praise comments, although this deficiency was less for video feedback than written feedback (written mode 3%, video mode 11%).

The logistic regression analysis using the data in Table 7 revealed that most forms of feedback were more likely with video feedback than written feedback, as written feedback had a high proportion of directive comments. As illustrated in Figure 7, feedback in the form of a model had 3.32 times greater odds, suggestions had 5.41 times greater odds, explanations had 5.12 times greater odds, praise had 10.14 times greater odds, and interpersonal comments had 19.5 greater odds to occur with video feedback, relative to a directive comment,

and all of these were statistically significant. Feedback in the form of a question had significantly less odds with video feedback ( $p = 0.01$ ).

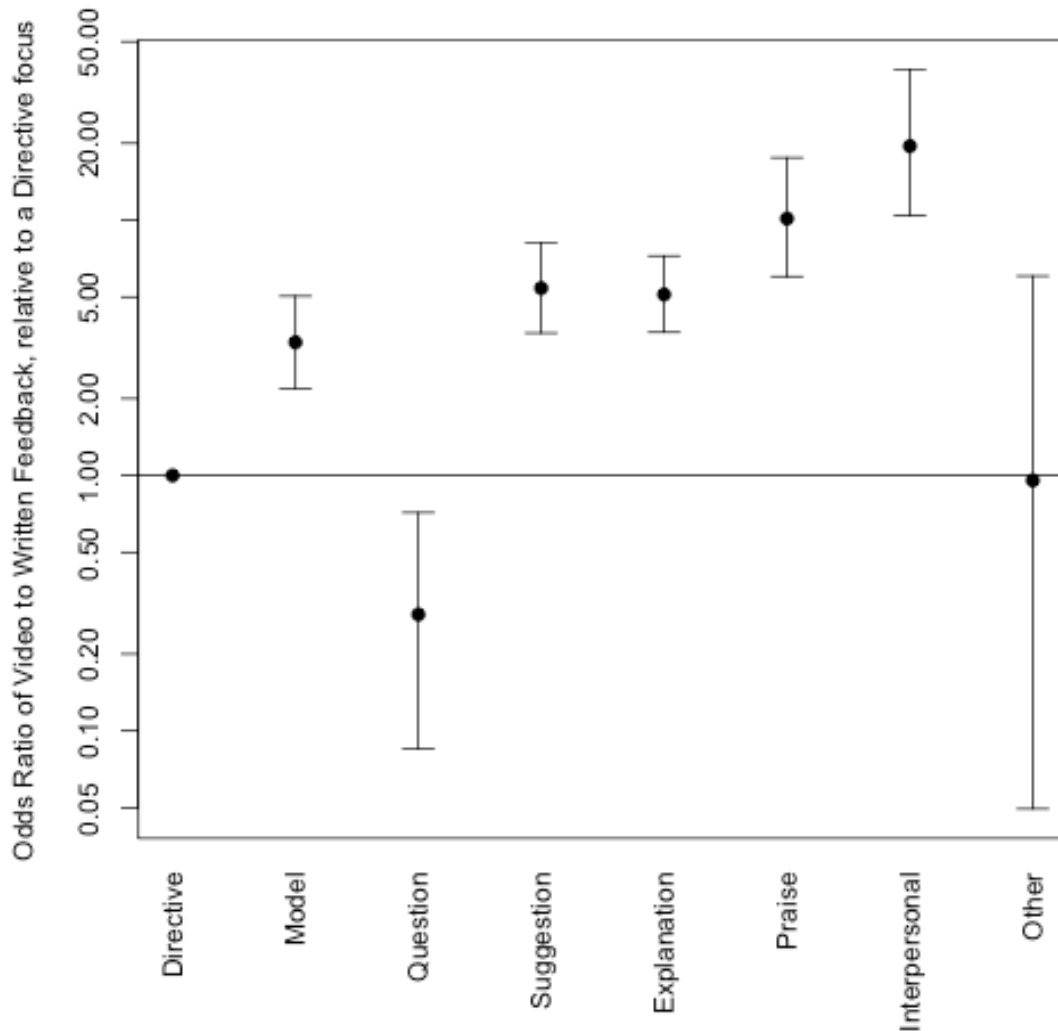


Figure 7. Odds ratios of video to written feedback, relative to a 'Directive' form

### 5.3 Findings in relation to student proficiency level

The results were further analysed to see whether there were any differences in feedback form between students with different levels of ELP. The results of the five students with highest ELP and the five with lowest ELP are compared in Table 8, which shows only small variations between the groups. The main discrepancy appeared in the model category with the video feedback; for the students with low ELP, there were 21 model video comments compared to eight given to the students with high ELP.

Table 8. Differences in feedback form between student proficiency level and mode of feedback

Feedback form	Written feedback		Video feedback	
	Low ELP	High ELP	Low ELP	High ELP
Directive	105 (52%)	85 (53%)	21 (19%)	20 (16%)
Model	21 (10%)	12 (8%)	21 (19%)	8 (6%)
Question	25 (12%)	11 (7%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
Suggestion	10 (5%)	14 (9%)	11 (10%)	21 (17%)
Explanation	27 (13%)	28 (18%)	31 (38%)	38 (31%)
Praise	7 (3%)	4 (3%)	11 (10%)	20 (16%)
Interpersonal	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	11 (10%)	17 (14%)
Other	4 (2%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	201	159	109	124

## 5.4 Discussion

As described in § 5.2, the results revealed that the mode of feedback influenced the form of the feedback, that is, how the feedback is expressed. The main finding is that written feedback tended to be highly directive, whereas video feedback was more likely to include explanations, suggestions and praise. Figure 8 shows a visual representation of this shift.

The differences in feedback form were smaller when comparing the written feedback to the video feedback plus the accompanying written comments (that is, the ‘Total’ column of Table 8), with differences of no more than 8% in all focus area categories. This suggests that incorporating video feedback does not completely change the form of the advisor’s feedback; instead, it indicates that video feedback is suited to certain forms of feedback (explanations, suggestions and praise) whereas written feedback is more suited to directives.

Nevertheless, the differences between written feedback and video feedback are noteworthy and five key shifts will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.



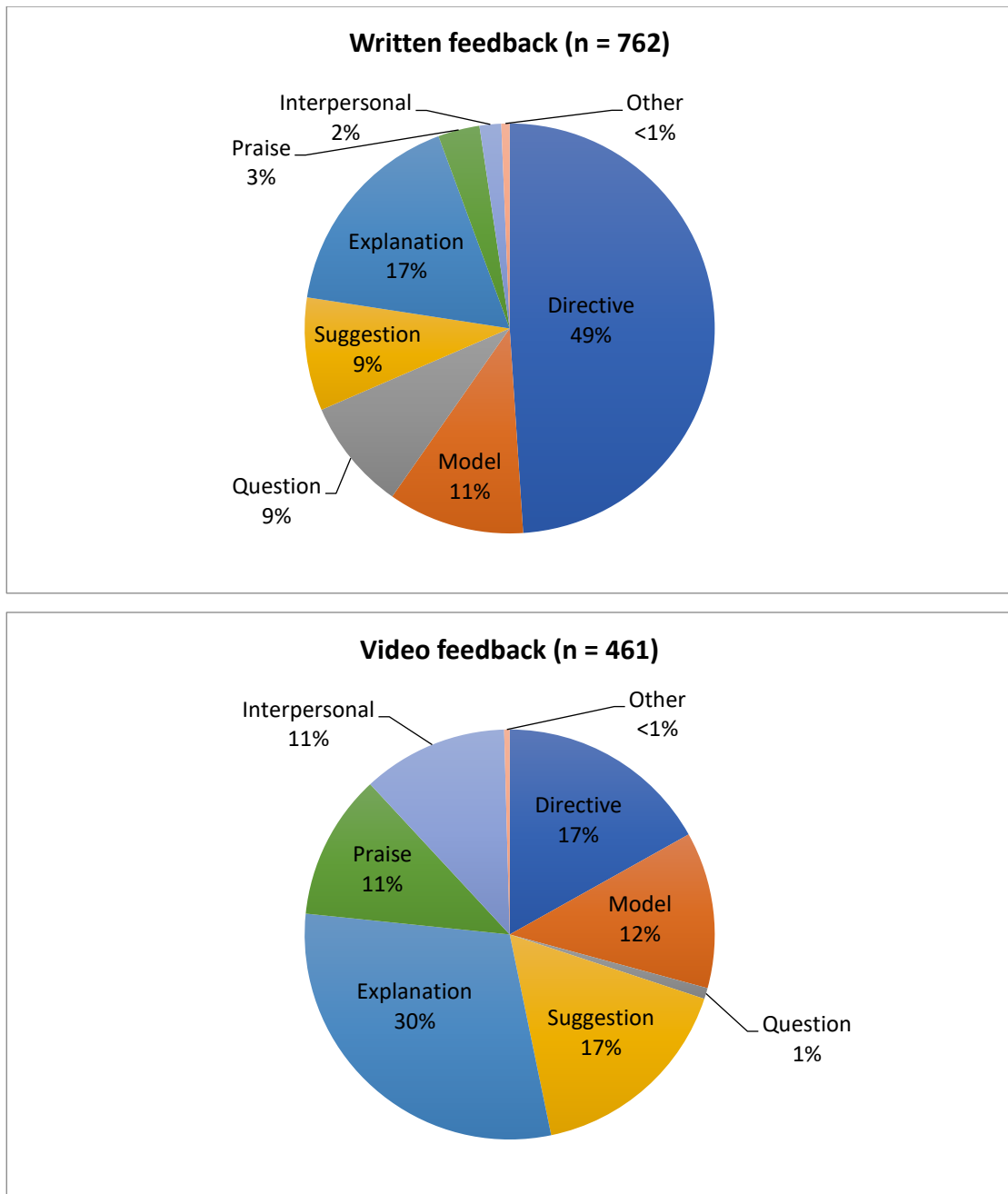


Figure 8. Advisor's feedback according to feedback form

#### **5.4.1 The shift from directives to explanations and suggestions**

As shown in Figure 8, directive comments comprised almost half of all the written feedback (49%). Directives refer to comments where an instruction is given or a correction is supplied. Examples of directive written comments are given in (14) and (15).

(14) *Put these colloquial terms in quotation marks: .....as 'aggressive beggars' or 'dole bludgers'* (Written feedback given in the form of a directive to student A1)

(15) *I'm still a little unclear what the purpose of your paper is (i.e. what you will do). Add in a clear signpost sentence like: This paper will outline the history of..... and discuss.....* (Written feedback given in the form of a directive to student B2)

Video feedback, on the other hand, was much less directive with only 17% of video comments categorised as directives. Instead, video feedback contained a higher portion of explanations and suggestions, with these two types of comments making up almost half of all video feedback (30% and 17% respectively). An example of a video comment that was coded as both explanation and suggestion is transcribed in (16).

(16) *"At the end of your intro [circles pointer at the end of the introduction], I would recommend adding a simple sentence that outlines the structure of your paper. This is usually a key part of any introduction and its helpful for the reader. A good way to do this - and this is for any essay - is to get the wording for this sentence from the unit outline, so from the actual task description which tells you what you have to do. That actually can be reflected here [circles pointer at the end of the introduction], so you can use some of the same language and then the educator can clearly see that you've really responded to the task description well."* (Video feedback given in the form of an explanation and suggestion to student B9)

As illustrated in (16), most of the video explanations began with a specific comment (*I would recommend adding a simple sentence that outlines the structure of your paper*) which was then complemented with a more forward-looking addition (*A good way to do this - and this is for any essay - is to.....*). There are several possible reasons for this shift from directive comments with written feedback to more explanation and suggestion comments with video

feedback. One reason is that the differences are linked to the shift in the focus of the comments that were described in the previous chapter. Of the 242 written comments that addressed linguistic accuracy, 196 of them (81%) included a directive. In other words, the high percentage of comments that focused on linguistic accuracy with the written feedback is strongly linked to the high percentage of directive comments. This could be because feedback on grammar, spelling and punctuation errors generally did not require an explanation, and instead a correction or brief instruction was given. As mentioned in the previous chapter, because writing tends to be less subjective and more direct than speech (Berman, 2015; Nassaji, 2015), this mode is perhaps more suited to the type of directive, explicit feedback that tends to be given on linguistic issues, especially if the issue is easy to advise on and easy to fix. With video feedback, there was less of a focus on linguistic accuracy issues, and the number of directive comments was also fewer. Instead, there was a greater proportion of feedback focused on content and structure and the advisor's comments on these issues were mostly framed as suggestions and explanations. Content and structure are typically more subjective, conceptual issues; therefore, they are likely to require feedback that is more hedged and detailed which is typical of the expanded and tentative type of discourse used in speech (Coates, 2016; Halliday, 1989). Elola and Oszok's (2016) study on video feedback had a similar finding; they found that the teacher gave longer explanations on content, structure and organisation issues when speaking on the video, and gave more explicit and direct written feedback when giving written comments on language accuracy issues.

Another explanation for the differences in the form of the feedback between written and video mode could be related to efficiency. With written feedback, explanations and suggestions might be 'wordy' and time consuming to type out, so an advisor may give directive feedback for the sake of expediency. With video feedback, on the other hand, the advisor can give verbal explanations easily and quickly. Other studies indicated that this was a key affordance of spoken feedback. For example, tutors in Merry and Orsmond's (2008) study stated that they found audio feedback particularly valuable for explaining

complex ideas and that they were able to suggest strategies for solving problems rather than just stating what the problems were. Similarly, Anson (2015) says that screen-capture video “allows instructors to verbally explain these nuances over the course of a few short minutes, as opposed to the many minutes it may take to adequately explain oneself through written comments.” (p. 376). In other video feedback studies, teachers said that they felt that video allowed for more depth, detail and elaboration and that they can easily and quickly explain things verbally (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Séror, 2012). The current study provides evidence that these perceptions and claims are accurate. For example, the written feedback given in (15) and the video feedback given in (16) both address the issue of a missing signposting sentence in the introduction. While the written comment does identify the problem and offer a solution, a more detailed explanation of the problem and a description of a strategy for revising are given in the video feedback. There was also a notable difference in the number of words used; 34 words were given with the written comment in (15) compared to 106 in the video comment in (16). As shown in Table 2 in § 3.6.1, overall, spoken feedback comments were typically around five times longer than a written feedback comment, with the average length of a written comment at 15 words compared to 75 words for a video comment. This is because speech has intricate, flowing clause complexes (Halliday, 1989) and feedback tends to be ‘unpacked’ when given verbally leading to more explanations and suggestions, in contrast to the typically compact directive feedback given in writing.

The third explanation for the differences in the form of the feedback is that the spoken format of video mode may also ‘soften’ the directives to suggestions. As highlighted in many earlier studies, video feedback feels personal and like a face-to-face conversation, which could explain this unconscious shift to more indirect and hedged language characteristic of speech (Coates, 2016). In the spoken feedback in the current study, the constructive criticism was usually preceded by some kind of alerter. For example, in comment (16) given earlier, there are phrases such as “*I would recommend...*”, “*This is usually...*”, “*A good way to do this...*”. In contrast, in the written feedback, comments were often bald

statements, such as the examples in (14) *“Put this in quotation marks”* and (15) *“Add in a clear signpost sentence”*. This can be explained by the differences in spoken and written language; in speech, hedges are used to “mitigate the force of what is said and thus protect both speaker’s and hearer’s face” (Coates, 2016, p. 90). Comments (15) and (16) are good examples of how feedback with a similar aim (that is, to signal that a signposting sentence is needed) is expressed differently in spoken and written modes. Comment (16) also illustrates how the advisor uses hedged speech even when discussing critical problems in a student’s work. Her feedback in (16) is framed as a suggestion, *“I would recommend adding a simple sentence that outlines the structure of your paper”*, even though a signposting sentence is a necessary element of an introduction.

The shift from highly directive feedback in written mode to use of more explanation and suggestion strategies in video mode indicates that spoken feedback more closely reflects the philosophy and theoretical orientation of ALL support. As discussed in Chapter 2, an advisor’s feedback aims to take an educative approach to help students as they encounter a new threshold in writing (Wilson et al., 2011). The advisor’s comments are intended to be both feedback on that particular piece of work, as well as information that students can internalise and ‘feed-forward’ to other pieces of writing. However, as directive feedback is likely to be specific to the task (as with comment (14) and (15) earlier in this section), it may be difficult for students to grasp how it could be applied to other work. On the other hand, feedback with an explanation component (such as the example given in (16)) gives information and strategies to help students construct their own understanding of academic writing, which they can then feed-forward into future writing tasks. From a Vygotskian perspective, the advisor’s pedagogical use of explanations would be seen as helping to extend the student’s zone of proximal development. The impact of explanations was illustrated by Heidi during her interview when she recalled a particular instance when a video explanation helped her extend her understanding of word forms:

(17) *“I prefer the explanation with it as well because it helps to consolidate in my head ... That spoon-fed thing without being challenged, without being*

*told why, it means you'll just keep repeating it. But if you explain it, I can then make sure then that I change everything else as well around it. Like with 'affect' and 'effect', by you explaining the differences – and I did look at the dictionary and it's vague - but the way that you worded it was easy for me to understand and I go, oh, yeah, okay, I see the difference here. Affect is a verb, or whatever it was, and effect is blah, blah, blah, blah, and so, yeah, that helps me to put it into practice. Every time I saw affect and effect throughout the paper it would be, okay, I'd think back, yeah, okay, it's affect, it's not effect.” (Excerpt from Heidi's interview)*

As illustrated by Heidi's comment, the explanation helped scaffold her understanding and she was then able to apply the feedback to other parts of her paper. According to Nicol (2010b), this kind of transferable information that focuses on processes, skills and self-regulatory abilities is the key to good feedback. Thus, explanations enhance the teaching and learning element of feedback, which underpins the philosophy of one-on-one ALL support.

As well as explanations, the greater proportion of suggestion comments with video mode also better aligns with the aims and philosophy of ALL support. As discussed, ALL support typically reflects the Vygotskian theoretical perspective that learning is a social, collaborative activity that emphasises the agency and active engagement of the learner in their writing development (Morton et al., 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). In line with this perspective, feedback in an academic advising context is seen as facilitative in that it aims to enable students to make their own decisions around revising without prescribing. The use of video helped achieve this aim by minimising directive or corrective comments which can “exclude students from feedback interactions and reduce the impact of feedback on learning” (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017, p. 262). Instead, the spoken feedback was more likely to be framed as suggestions and explanations, which point the way forward in a more mentoring than teacher-like manner. This type of feedback places the student in a position of responsibility for revising their work as they are not simply following a directive; instead, they can consider the advice in order to make decisions about how to revise their work. The different

approach taken in each mode is illustrated in the example of written feedback in (15) and video feedback in (16) given earlier in this section. Both comments address the issue of a missing signposting sentence in the introduction and the feedback message is similar; the advisor is 'telling' the student to add in a signposting sentence. In the written comment, the advisor is quite authoritative and directive by using the infinitive "*Add in...*". In contrast, in the spoken video feedback, the advisor provided advice and a strategy for how the student could incorporate a signposting sentence and meet the expectations of her educator. This less direct approach may have been influenced by the specific piece of writing and the student, but it is also as a consequence of mode change, as speech tends to be less confrontational and less forceful (K. Hyland, 2002). Thus, the student is positioned as not simply someone who is being instructed and corrected but instead as an apprentice writer with agency, and the advisor is positioned as a collaborator rather than transmitter of information. Therefore, spoken video feedback takes a more facilitative, collaborative approach to assisting students, congruent with the Vygotskian theoretical perspective.

All of the abovementioned findings related to feedback form indicate that video mode can lead to feedback that is better aligned with good practice principles. The greater emphasis on comments in the form of explanations can help implement several of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) good practice principles. The video allows the advisor to provide an in-depth explanation for why something is or is not working within the paper, and also allows for explanations about readers, texts, genres, language and/or conventions which can "help clarify what good performance is" and "deliver high quality information to students" about academic writing (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 205). In addition, it is important for students to understand why their text needs revising because this will motivate them to think about what they are trying to say and to remember the point when they write their next paper, thereby facilitating self-assessment and reflection (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In other words, explanation comments that inform students and encourage reflection move students towards more meaningful and involved

writing. The benefits of explanations particularly impact students with low ELP, as the proportion of explanation comments was even greater for these students than the average for the whole group. For the low ELP group, only 13% of the written comments were explanations (compared to 17% for the whole group of participants), whereas with video feedback 38% of the comments were explanations (compared to 30% for the whole group of participants), which is an increase of 25% (compared to 13% for the whole group).

As well as explanations, the increase in the proportion of comments in the form of suggestions is also pedagogically sound. One of Straub's (2000) recommendations is to avoid taking control of a student's text. The decrease in the amount of directives and an increase in suggestions indicates that video mode may lead teachers to be less prescriptive when responding to students. In addition, indirect comments are often advocated over direct comments, as they engage students in problem solving and reflection, which is likely to lead to better writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). However, indirect feedback may not be appropriate for more complex issues (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In addition, indirect language can be confusing for some students who may need more explicit guidance (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Murphy, 2000), which may explain why the group of students with low ELP received a smaller proportion of video comments as suggestions (10%) compared to the average for the whole group (17%). For example, it is possible that the comment given earlier in (16) about adding a signposting sentence framed as a suggestion could be interpreted by the student as something optional, whereas this is in fact a critical element that is missing from the introduction and needs to be revised. Ajjawi and Boud (2017) argue that face-saving strategies, such as the hedging used in comment (16) to 'soften' feedback, may reduce the impact of feedback on learning. Therefore, at times, directive feedback may be more appropriate and may even be expected by students. For example, Hennessy and Forrester (2014) found that as part of the transition into higher education, first-year students expected directive feedback in higher education so that they could learn to write 'properly'. Students may find directives like those given in (14) and (15) helpful as there is a clear and



immediate benefit to reading and responding to this feedback. However, these types of directive comments should be balanced with less direct advice so that the feedback is not overly prescriptive.

As well as facilitating a less prescriptive approach, audio-visual feedback mode may also support the stance of ALL departments to avoid proofreading and editing students' work. Even though this stance is also taken by the advisor in this study, the high amount of directive comments focusing on linguistic accuracy issues with the written mode of feedback suggests that there was an element of editing and proofreading occurring. For example, many of the written directive comments were imperatives such as *Comma needed* or *Delete this* or *Start a new sentence here* which were written as the advisor went through the paper line by line. Audio-visual feedback appears to help minimise these types of comments because the advisor has the opportunity to reflect on the paper holistically before composing the video, which helps move the feedback away from heavily directive comments on editing issues.

Despite these benefits, the findings could also be interpreted as indicating that linguistic accuracy issues are more suited to direct feedback, and indeed, other researchers have suggested that direct feedback is beneficial for language errors. Bitchener and Knoch (2010) argue that because direct feedback provides learners with explicit correction, in some cases it is more effective in assisting learners to improve linguistic accuracy in written work. Ferris and Roberts (2001) question whether indirect feedback is appropriate for complicated and idiosyncratic errors in sentence structure, as they found in their study that students had difficulty editing such errors successfully compared to other types of errors. In their experiences with English language learners, Hyland and Hyland (2006) found that most students want directive comments on their grammar and lexical choices. The interview with Noora in the current study revealed a similar preference. Noora, who speaks English as her third language, stated that she liked direct comments on grammar issues that included a correction: *"Some of the comments with the example, those ones were so important and were so helpful to me. I like an example how I can fix my grammar"*. Therefore, a teacher may prefer to use direct comments when giving

feedback on language issues if it is what students prefer. This may be done more easily in the written format at “point of need” next to the error. However, the long-term effects of this approach should also be considered. Ferris’ (2011) research in the field of second language writing found that direct error correction led to more correct revisions (88%) than indirect error feedback (77%); however, over the course of the semester, it was noted that students who received indirect feedback reduced their error frequency ratios substantially more than those who received direct feedback. In sum, while some students will prefer and benefit from a direct approach including explicit feedback on linguistic ‘errors’, they also need encouragement through collaborative discourse to take an increasingly autonomous and engaged approach to developing their academic writing skills.

#### **5.4.2 The shift to more praise comments**

Another noteworthy difference between written and video feedback regarding feedback form relates to the use of praise. There were very few praise comments with the written feedback (n = 25, 3%), which is a somewhat sobering finding, but there were significantly more with video feedback (n = 53, 11%). Interestingly, there was an even greater proportion of praise comments for the group of students with high ELP, with 16% of the video comments classified as praise. This may be due to those students having produced well-written texts with more strengths that the advisor could comment on.

Most of the written praise comments were short statements or exclamations, such as *Lovely referencing!* 😊 (written comment given to student A10). In contrast, most of the video comments that were praise were longer and contained an explanation. In each of the 20 feedback videos, the advisor began by greeting the student, and then gave some positive feedback that highlighted a strength(s) of the paper before dealing with the areas for improvement. Two examples of video comments that were coded as praise and explanation (because they explain why the praise was being given) are shown in (18) and (19):

(18) *“First of all I think you’ve done a great job with your essay. I think that there’s a good balance between discussing the theory and your own reflections and that’s not an easy thing to do, so you’ve done a really good job there.”* (Video feedback given in the form of praise and explanation given to student A4)

(19) *“Overall, I think you’ve done a really good job with your essay. It has really good structure, so you’ve got a very clear introduction, and then a summary of the video, and then explanation of each of the three skills that the counsellor used which is fantastic, and a really good conclusion as well. As a reader, that makes it really very easy to read.”* (Video feedback given in the form of praise and explanation given to student A9)

Lengthier and more detailed positive comments with video feedback were also noted by Stannard (2008). He found that with written feedback it was common to see comments like *Good* and *Well done* without any additional information. In contrast, positive feedback given via video was always elaborated on with an explanation of why that section of the text was strong.

The higher amount of praise comments in the videos suggests that the spoken format may elicit a more encouraging and interpersonal approach to giving feedback. This is because spoken texts, even monologic ones, are more social and communicatively oriented than written texts (Berman, 2015). As mentioned, the advisor always started the video with positive feedback before discussing the areas for improvement, so the praise comments formed part of the extended opening move of the spoken recording. This way of using praise as a ‘sweetener’ is a common strategy when giving feedback in a range of contexts as it functions interpersonally to “establish rapport with the audience and mitigate the criticism to follow” (K. Hyland, 2000, p. 53). Often described as a feedback ‘sandwich’ whereby the feedback provider makes positive comments, provides critique and ends with positive comments, this technique is advocated by some (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Leibold & Schwarz, 2015); however, Parkes,

Abercrombie and McCarty (2013) found the sandwich approach had no positive impact on subsequent performance even though it was favourably received by students. In the current study, the advisor gave written feedback in comment bubbles in the margin of the text, so there was not the same opportunity to provide an opening comment that included praising the overall strength(s) of the paper. Moreover, the advisor also had the opportunity to reflect on the paper holistically before recording the video. This may have led to more reflections about what was good about the paper, which may not be as easy to identify when providing feedback line-by-line or section-by-section when giving written comments in the margin.

Like feedback on areas of weakness, feedback on areas of strength can also help students scaffold their own understandings about academic writing. Positive feedback can reinforce the student's own perceptions about what is working and encourage them to use similar strategies when writing future assignments (Goldstein, 2004). However, praise needs to be specific and focused for it to be effective (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Meyer & Niven, 2007), so praise that is accompanied by an explanation is particularly valuable. As mentioned in the previous section, explanations give students information that they can feed-forward into future writing tasks, and this includes when giving positive feedback. For example, the praise comments illustrated earlier in (18) and (19) are unlikely to lead the students to make any changes to their text, yet the explanations still serve an important teaching function. This is because they reinforce and encourage the strategies the students used, and, just like more critical feedback, help students construct their own understandings about academic writing (Lidz, 1991; Panahi et al., 2013; Vygotsky, 1978) which will ideally be 'filed away' for future assessments. In her interview, Noora revealed that positive feedback was important for her for this very reason:

(20) *"You know when you put the comment in my assignment you said that, 'Your reference is looking perfect'? ... This is a good one, that I know that I have done a good job with referencing. And also, introduction, I don't know, in one of my assignment you said, 'Your introduction is really good,' which I know now that I had my thesis statement and everything that -*

*because when I received that feedback I thought, yeah, okay, I'm in the right direction. That was a good one because I know how to write in my introduction again."* (Excerpt from Noora's interview)

Kris also made a similar point and noted that specific positive feedback was most useful:

(21) *"I mean, I love specific encouragement, to say this is why the writing style works. So when you did this, that worked - when you did that, it worked. Because then that helps me understand how to emulate that again for next time. And I mean, as we're learning in psychology, when you encourage people's strengths, they obviously expand on those strengths ... It was great to hear 'you had a lovely writing style', but it's also good to hear an explanation of why it works."* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

The inclusion of praise and positive reinforcement is seen as good practice when giving feedback as it validates student work. One of Straub's (2000) recommendations is simply to "make frequent use of praise" (p. 46), and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) say it is important that feedback fosters positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. In his interview, Kris revealed that positive feedback did help boost his confidence: *"I mean, it is daunting to write an essay, no matter how good you are at it. To know that you're doing something right, obviously kind of empowers you to keep going better at it."* This illustrates how praise can help build self-efficacy, which is an important part of academic development, as well as an important role of ALL advisors (Habel, 2009).

In summary, the findings suggest that video mode may be a way to facilitate more positive feedback, which is important as these types of comments scaffold understanding and serve a teaching function, as well as boost self-efficacy.

#### **5.4.3 The shift to more interpersonal comments**

Another difference in the feedback between written and video mode related to the number of interpersonal comments. In a similar trend to the praise comments, there were few interpersonal comments with written feedback (n =

13, 2%) but significantly more with video feedback (n = 53, 11%). The interpersonal comments typically related to the greeting and closing focused comments; greeting and closing comments made up 38 of the 53 interpersonal video comments. An example of this type of comment is shown in (22):

(22) *“Good luck with revising and feel free to give me a call or send me an email if you have any questions”* (Video feedback in the form of an interpersonal comment given to student A2)

Other types of interpersonal comments included exclamations like *Wow!* 😊 (written comment given to student A3) when responding to interesting content and intended to show engagement, as well as statements to help build rapport, reassure the student or invite contact. An example of this kind of interpersonal comment is shown in (23).

(23) *“I’m happy to talk with you about referencing a little bit more if anything is still a bit unclear. I know it’s a bit tricky to get your head around when you first start, but overall you’ve actually done quite a good job. It’s just sort of tidying it up a little bit, so I’m happy to talk about that with you at any time.”* (Video feedback in the form of an interpersonal comment given to student B4)

Both (22) and (23) were given as part of the closing remarks in the video feedback to each student and contributed to the conversation-like structure (greeting, body, closing). The spoken interpersonal comments also functioned as an element of the feedback ‘sandwich’ (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Leibold & Schwarz, 2015); as mentioned in the previous section, after greeting the student, the video feedback began with specific praise for strengths within the paper. This was followed by feedback on the key areas of weakness and strategies for improvement, and the final section was a closing interpersonal comment that was positive and encouraging. On the other hand, the few written interpersonal comments were mostly simple statements or exclamations that were responses to interesting content (for example, *Wow!* 😊) rather than being a key ‘phase’ of the feedback.

As with the praise comments, the higher amount of interpersonal comments with video mode appears to be attributed to the fact that feedback is given verbally. Because spoken texts are more social and communicatively oriented than written texts (Berman, 2015), the interpersonal comments given in the video feedback aim to encourage, reassure and build rapport with the student. This is achieved linguistically by the use of personal pronouns, as well as qualifiers and hedges. Interpersonal comments often included the personal pronouns *I* and *you*, which Gardner (2004) found was more common in spoken feedback than in written feedback, and they reduce the level of formality and create greater personal involvement with the student. In addition, many of the interpersonal comments included qualifiers and hedges; for example, in (23) hedges such as *a bit*, *actually*, *sort of*, and *just* are used. These words are typical of speech (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014) and help mitigate the force of what is said (Coates, 2016). In his interview, Kris indicated that these spoken nuances made the feedback feel warmer:

(24) *"It's also really good to hear - I don't know - I mean, I guess it's probably also the way you speak, your tone of voice. And I guess, you know, the nature that comes across when you speak. I felt really, I guess comfortable. I didn't feel like you know were attacking or condescending my writing."* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

Kris' observation also indicates that the spoken feedback helps to position the advisor as someone who can point the way forward in a collegial way, which aligns with the Vygotskian view of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978). As illustrated in example (23), many of the interpersonal comments in the video feedback use face-saving strategies such as hedging (*a bit*, *just*) and frame the comments in a developmental context. This helps construct the student as an apprentice and the advisor as someone who can help guide their development in a non-threatening way. Of course, the same type of comments could be provided when giving written feedback; however, as illustrated in this study, this is perhaps more difficult to do when the written feedback is not provided

with a greeting-body-closing structure. In addition, because more words can be provided in speech than writing in the same amount of time, there is more opportunity for these types of comments to be easily and naturally provided as part of the spoken video feedback.

#### **5.4.4 The shift in the type of modelling comments**

The form of feedback that showed the least amount of discrepancy between the two modes of feedback was model (written feedback 11%, video feedback, 12%). This indicates that both modes of feedback are suitable for providing a model or demonstration. However, a closer analysis of the comments indicated that modelling was carried out in different ways depending on the mode. The model comments in the written mode of feedback often involved modelling a sentence structure, as shown in example (25), or modelling how to reference according to APA style, as shown (26) where the advisor models how to cite a secondary source. In both examples, a directive was also included; therefore, the comments were coded as both a directive and model.

(25) *Avoid asking questions in academic assignments. This could be changes [sic] to a statement: A key question is whether anxiety is a result of X or Y.* (Written feedback in the form of a directive and model given to student B9)

(26) *Almost! There's no need for page numbers, but you do need to add in the year for Ross. Also, use "as cited in" instead of "quoted by":* (*Thornicroft, 2007, as cited in Ross, XXXX*). (Written feedback in the form of a directive and model given to student B6)

In these examples, the advisor directly modelled the language of academic discourse, which Lillis (2001) describes as "making language visible" (p. 133).

Some of the video comments also modelled sentences for the student; however, they were spoken rather than written by the advisor. The type of modelling that



was more common with video mode was visual modelling and demonstrations. For example, many of the model video comments showed students how to use the formatting features of Microsoft Word, such as how to change the line spacing and how to use the ruler to indent their reference list according to APA rules (as shown in comment (8) in § 4.4.3). These demonstrations are made possible due to the visual element of the screen-capture technology and could not be done with the written mode of feedback. Crook et al. (2012) mentioned that being able to provide visual demonstrations was a key advantage of screen-capture feedback in their study. Séror (2012) came to a similar conclusion, arguing that teachers can communicate with greater flexibility with the addition of the valuable, dynamic visual dimension.

The findings also show that modelling comments with the video mode of feedback were even more prevalent for students with low ELP than high ELP. The results in Table 8 in § 5.3 show only small variations in the forms of feedback between proficiency levels, with the exception of model video comments. Students in the low ELP group received 21 model video comments (19%) compared to students in the high ELP group who received just 8 (6%). All of the modelling comments for the students with low ELP involved explicit and detailed kinds of modelling, as opposed to simply modelling a sentence structure or a reference, and often involved modeling a process. For example, one of the students with low ELP had sent the advisor an essay that had a very poor structure. It had many underdeveloped paragraphs (some were one-sentence paragraphs), and the information was not grouped together logically. It was also difficult to determine how and where the student was addressing each section of task description in the unit outline. After verbally explaining these issues to the student, the advisor then opened the unit outline on the screen and explained that the task description and marking criteria could help with the structure for the essay. The advisor then switched back to the student's Word document, where the advisor had inserted a table on the first page with a plan for the structure of the essay. The advisor then modelled how she created the scaffold using the task description in the unit outline.

Modelling was also used to demonstrate the process of referencing to another student in the low ELP group via video mode. The student had simply listed the URLs to her sources in her reference list without giving the other details that are required according to APA rules. After explaining to the student that more information was required, including the author, the year and the name of the webpage, the advisor then showed the student a corrected reference as a model, and also demonstrated to the student how she found all the other necessary information, as shown in (27) and continued in (28) (the comments were classified as separate feedback comments).

(27) *"I've referenced that one in full for you as an example. You can see there's the author [highlights author's name], there's the year [highlights the year], there's the name of the website [highlights the name of the website] and then I've given the URL [highlights the URL]."* (Video feedback in the form of a model given to student B2)

(28) *"So I'm just going to show you the webpage now to show you where I got all that info from [switches to web browser where website has been pre-loaded]. So this is the link you gave me. I went to the, I think, 'contact us' page and I found that the author is the 'Department of Community Services' [highlights author]. I found the year at the bottom here [moves cursor and highlights the year] and I also found the name of page up the top here as you can see [moves cursor to heading at the top of the webpage]. So all of that information needs to be put into the reference list – not just the URL. So, have a go at doing that with the rest of the references - it's really important that you get this right."* (Video feedback in the form of a model and directive given to student B2)

In both of these examples of modelling (creating an essay plan and referencing correctly), the advisor incorporated two types of modelling: modelling the process and modelling the end product. In the first example, the advisor modelled how to use the unit outline to plan a piece of writing (modelling the process) and then gave an example scaffold in a table format (modelling the

product). In the second example, the advisor modelled a correct reference according to APA style (modelling the product) and then modelled how to find the necessary information from the source (modelling the process). In both cases, the screen-capture technology facilitated the modelling, particularly when modelling the process by talking it through verbally, as well as by making use of the visual element to draw attention to the end products.

Modelling in general is considered a highly effective strategy and can help students to notice the gap between their current standard of work and required performance, which Schmidt (1990) argues is essential for learning. It also helps clarify what good performance is, which is one of Nicol and McFarlane-Dick's (2006) principles of good feedback practice. This is indeed the aim of the written model feedback comments given in (25) and (26) where the advisor has demonstrated or provided an example of what the sentence and reference should look like. This type of modelling suits the written mode as a student can 'cut and paste' the model and then fill in the gaps, which is much easier than if the model sentence structure or reference was spoken and had to be transcribed by the student.

In contrast, the type of modelling given in the video feedback tended to demonstrate writing and revision *processes*, which is powerful as it can make these processes overt and imitable (Lavelle, 2009). This is a crucial feature of social learning theory where writing is seen as a product of collaborative work and imitation, which, in Vygotsky's view, forms the basis of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the examples given in (27) and (28), the advisor models various dimensions of the writing process (planning and referencing), thereby working to extend the students' zone of proximal development by scaffolding understanding about how to achieve a good final product. Modelling a process is also crucial in raising self-efficacy; as well as seeing an example of the target structure or skill, students can also identify with the process through modelling, which "serves to elevate efficacy beliefs. 'Oh, I see how she does it, I think that I can do that too'" (Lavelle, 2009, p. 420). In sum, the findings indicate that while the proportion of modelling comments was similar for both written and video mode (11% and 12% respectively), the

written feedback tended to give students a model or example structure in writing. On the other hand, video feedback allowed for verbal and visual kinds of modelling that often included talking through a process.

#### **5.4.5 The shift to fewer questions**

The final significant difference between written and video feedback was in the proportion of comments in question form, from 67 (9%) given in written feedback to just four (1%) given in video feedback. Two examples of written comments in the form of questions are given in (29) and (30).

(29) *Do these words need to be capitalised?* (Written feedback given in the form of a question given to student A4)

(30) *Is this saying the same thing twice? What do you think?* (Written feedback given in the form of a question given to student A4)

The differences in the number of questions is likely to be because the video feedback is spoken and therefore tends to be made up of flowing sentences and clauses typical of speech (Halliday, 1989). This would be particularly true of a monologue such as the recorded spoken feedback where there is no interlocutor to 'answer' the question being asked. Instead, other types of constructions might be more suitable, for example, (30) might be reframed as a suggestion if it were to be spoken (for example, "*I suggest that you take a look at these sentences and think about whether they are perhaps saying the same thing.*")

Feedback in the form of a question typically aims to prompt thinking or action (Wilson et al., 2011; Wolsey, 2008). In the examples given above in (29) and (30), the aims of the questions were to prompt the student to think about why the words did/did not need to be capitalised and whether a particular sentence could be written more concisely. However, some researchers have suggested that questions can be difficult for some students to decipher due to the implicit nature of indirect speech (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Kris confirmed this in his

interview, stating that if a question is asked in written feedback, the real meaning can get lost (the underlining shows where Kris spoke with emphasis):

(31) *“So if someone says, ‘Do you think you need a reference here?’ I’m going to say, ‘Well, obviously I didn’t think that. And now you’re raising the question this makes me think, well I don’t actually know. Do you think I need a reference here?’ Because I’m at this point, I haven’t decided ... I mean, you can’t hear the tone of voice. So if someone says, ‘Do you think you need a reference here?’ you don’t know whether they’re saying, ‘Hmm, do you think you need a reference here?’ or if they’re saying “Now listen, you need a reference here.” Do you know what I mean? You don’t know whether it’s a loaded question or whether it’s a genuine, oh you know, this could be referenced.”* (Excerpt from Kris’ interview)

Kris also stated that feedback framed as a question can also feel condescending:

(32) *“I mean, it comes across to me a little bit kind of patronising. Almost like, ‘I’m not going to tell you what to do, but I strongly suggest that you do’”.* (Excerpt from Kris’ interview)

This suggests that framing feedback as a question may not be an ideal way to give written feedback as it may cause frustration. In addition, it may even work against the cooperative approach intended by an ALL advisor by appearing ‘withholding’, as suggested by Kris. Therefore, the shift to fewer questions with video feedback may help with the clarity and helpfulness of the feedback.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings related to the effect of mode on the form of the feedback, that is, how the feedback was expressed. The analytical framework identified seven forms of feedback: (1) directive, (2) model, (3) question, (4) suggestion, (5) explanation, (6) praise and (7) interpersonal. The findings show that the range of feedback forms used in video feedback was greater in comparison to written feedback. Written feedback was

highly directive, whereas video feedback was more likely to include explanations and suggestions. This shift in form is linked to the shift in focus from linguistic accuracy with written mode, where directive comments were typically used to address these issues, to a greater focus on content and structure issues with video mode, which required more explanatory, detailed and hedged feedback. In addition, the video allowed the advisor to give verbal explanations easily and quickly. Because speech is more social and communicatively oriented, the video feedback tended to include more praise and interpersonal comments that aimed to encourage students and build rapport. Both modes of feedback contained a similar proportion of modelling comments but of different types; written model comments offered an example sentence or structure, whereas video model comments tended to verbally and visually model a process, particularly for students with low ELP. These findings related to feedback form indicate that video mode can lead to feedback that reflects the collegial, educative approach of ALL support by offering students information and strategies they can use to construct their own understandings about academic writing which they can then 'feed-forward' to other pieces of writing. The spoken format can also help align feedback with good practice principles, such as avoiding taking control of students' work (Straub, 2000).

# Chapter 6

## The effect of mode on students' uptake of feedback

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have described the effect of written and audio-visual mode on the advisor's comments. This chapter presents and discusses the findings regarding how the students revised their paper in response to these comments. This addresses the third research question: Does the mode of feedback affect students' successful uptake of feedback? This was important to measure because for feedback to be considered effective, it must not only be delivered appropriately, but it must also be used by the students to close the feedback 'loop' (Jonsson, 2013; Sadler, 1998). To assess the effect of the feedback on the students' revisions, categories for classifying how students responded to a feedback comment were developed as the third part of the analytical framework. From the analysis, four categories emerged:

- Successful revision
- Unsuccessful revision
- No change
- Deleted text

These categories are described in more detail in Table 9.

The following sections of this chapter present the findings related to the effect of mode on the students' uptake of feedback and discuss the findings in relation to the literature. As with the previous findings chapters, some relevant quotations from the students' questionnaires and interviews are included in this chapter; however, the majority of the questionnaire and interview findings are provided in Chapter 7.

Table 9. Analytical framework for classifying students' response to feedback

<b>Response</b>	<b>Description</b>
Successful revision	Student made a revision based on the feedback that improved the text
Unsuccessful revision	Student made a revision based on the feedback that did not improve the text
No change	Student made no explicit response to the feedback
Deleted text	Student deleted the section of the text to which the feedback referred

## 6.2 Findings

Before presenting the findings, it should be noted that a number of feedback comments were excluded from this part of the analysis because they did not require the student to make a specific revision. These comments comprised greeting and closing comments or stand-alone praise or interpersonal comments. For example, a comment that said *Lovely referencing!* implied that the student did not need to make any revisions to their work in response to the comment. Therefore, these comments were excluded from this part of the analysis so as not to skew the results. There were 27 written comments and 87 video comments that did not require students to make revisions; therefore, these were not included in this phase of analysis. Hence, the total number of comments that required a response from the student was 500 for the written mode (the total number of written comments  $n = 527$ , minus the 27 comments requiring no revisions) and 164 for the video mode (the total number of video comments  $n = 251$ , minus the 87 comments requiring no revisions).

Table 10 shows the findings for the types of revisions students made in response to the feedback. As shown, the degree of successful uptake of feedback varied depending on the mode of feedback. With written-only feedback, 77% led to a successful revision compared to 88% with video feedback. There was a corresponding reduction in the amount of unsuccessful revision, no change and deleted text with video feedback.



Table 10. Summary of student revisions in response to feedback

Student response	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode		
		Video feedback	Written feedback	Total
Successful revision	384 (77%)	144 (88%)	209 (82%)	353 (84%)
Unsuccessful revision	14 (3%)	1 (1%)	4 (2%)	5 (1%)
No change	71 (14%)	17 (10%)	38 (15%)	55 (13%)
Deleted text	31 (6%)	2 (1%)	5 (2%)	7 (2%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	500	164	256	420

A logistic regression revealed that the odds of a successful revision were 2.17 times higher for video feedback relative to written feedback, which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.002$ ) (see Figure 9).

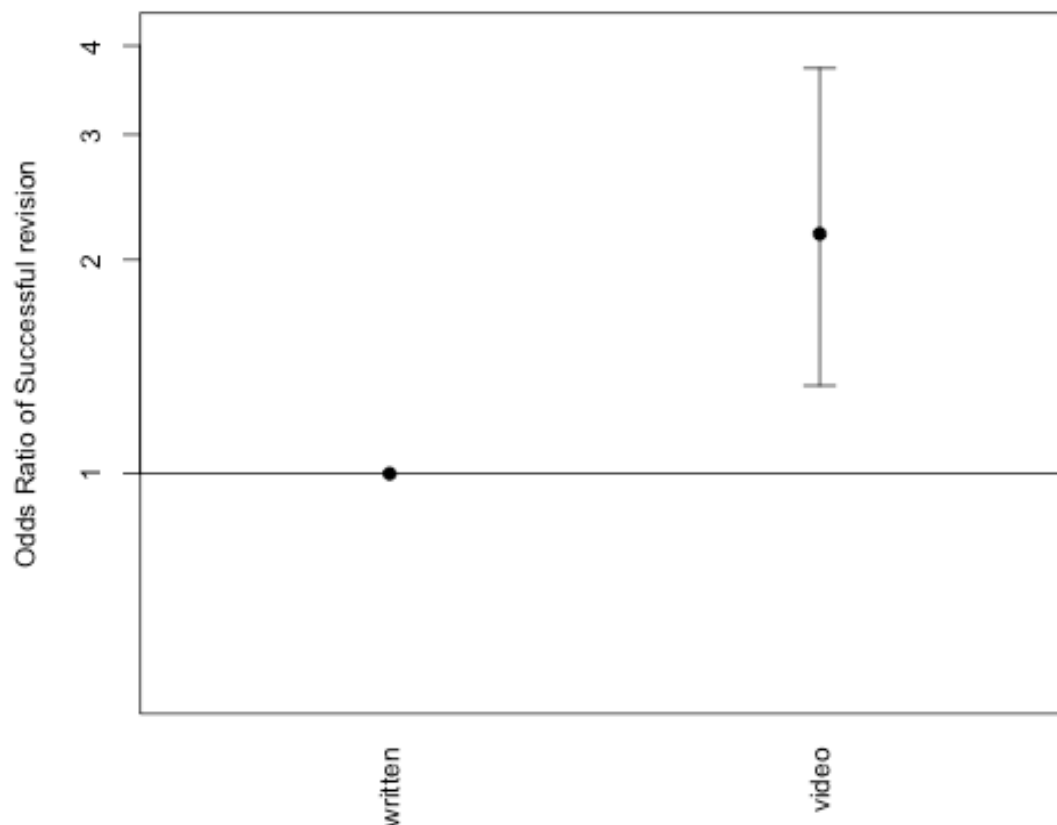


Figure 9. The odds ratio of a successful revision for video feedback relative to written feedback

Table 10 shows that 84% of the feedback in audio-visual mode (that is video feedback plus accompanying written comments) led to a successful revision compared to 77% in written-only mode. A logistic regression of written mode and audio-visual mode shows that the odds of a successful revision are 1.59 times higher with audio-visual mode. This is slightly smaller than video-only feedback, but still significant ( $p = 0.006$ ) (see Figure 10).

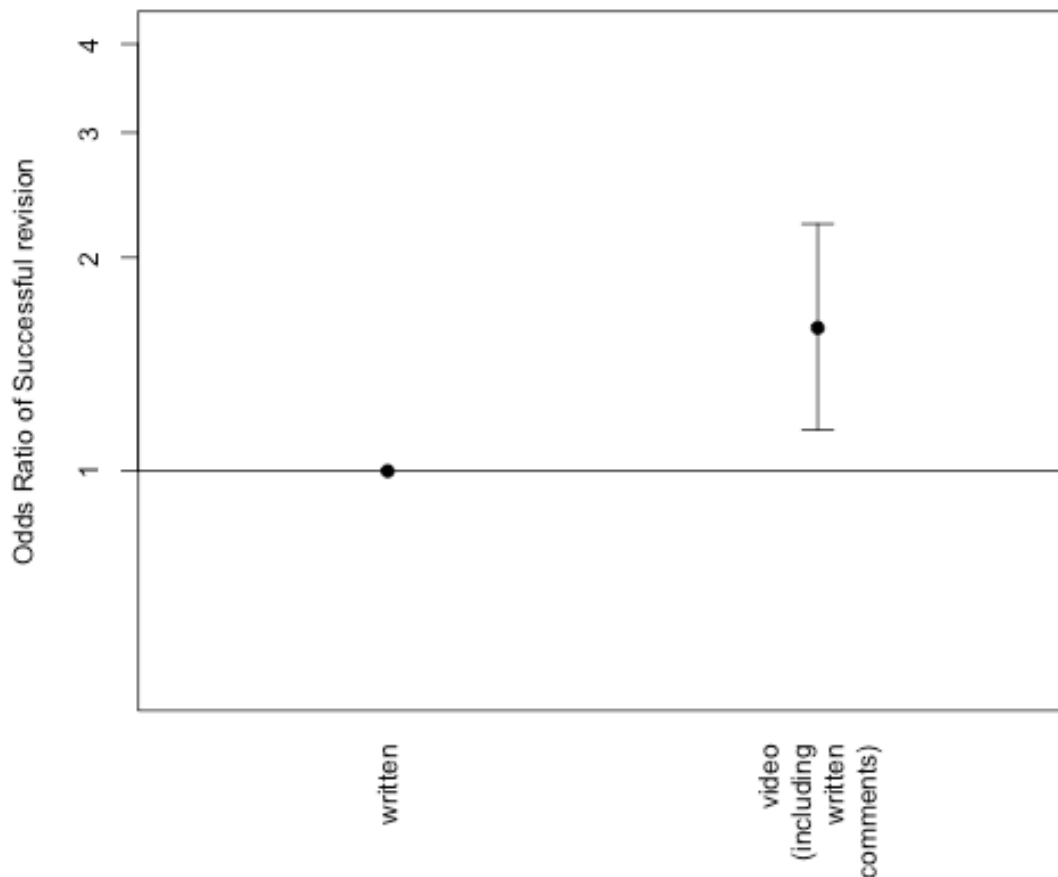


Figure 10. The odds ratio of a successful revision for audio-visual mode (video feedback plus the accompanying written comments) relative to written mode

An example of feedback that led to a successful revision is shown in (33). The feedback was given on the section of the student's text shown in "Original text", and the student's successful revision in response to the comment is shown in "Revised text".

(33) *I suggest adding in something to this sentence to explain that you are analysing/using a case study/sample session (i.e. the video). For example,*

*something like: This essay analyses a recorded counselling session and will describe.....* (Written feedback given to student A5)

Original text

This essay will describe these qualities, explain how the counsellor expresses them, and explain how the client responds to the use of these skills.

Revised text

This essay analyses an audiovisual counselling session and will describe the abovementioned qualities, explain how the counsellor expresses them, and explain how the client responds to the use of these skills.

An example of feedback that led to an unsuccessful revision is shown in (34). As above, the feedback was given on the section of the student's text shown in "Original text", and the student's unsuccessful revision in response to the comment is shown in "Revised text".

(34) *If you are going to use the names at the start of the sentence like this, then there's no need to add the names again to the end of the sentence – just don't forget to put the year after the names.* (Written feedback given to student B9)

Original text

Boylan & Scott point out that clients come to counseling feeling vulnerable, nervous and with their own concerns. (Boylan, J., & Scott, J. 2009).

Revised text

Boylan & Scott point out that clients come to counseling feeling vulnerable, nervous and with their own concerns.

The results were also examined to determine whether there was any difference between Group A, who received written feedback on their first text and audio-visual feedback on their second, and Group B, who received audio-visual feedback on their first text and written feedback on their second. Table 11 shows the percentage of comments that led to a successful revision for each group in each mode. While the percentages of successful revisions were similar between the groups for written mode, there is a larger discrepancy for audio-visual mode. This discrepancy can be explained by the actions of one student in Group A (student A1) who only successfully revised 25% of the video feedback, whereas the other the students in Group A averaged 90%. In addition, she successfully revised only 8% of the video feedback including the accompanying written comments. Thus, the differences in the results between the groups for the video mode can be attributed to this student rather than the order of the mode of feedback.

Table 11. Successful revisions according to group

	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode	
		Video feedback	Total (Video feedback + written feedback)
Group A	179/232 (77%)	70/83 (84%)	136/182 (75%)
Group B	204/270 (76%)	74/81 (91%)	217/238 (91%)

The findings were further dissected to show the results for each individual student and are given in Appendix J. Of the 20 student participants, 15 students had higher percentage of successful revisions after receiving audio-visual feedback, three students had a higher percentage of successful revisions after receiving written feedback, and two students had an equal amount of successful revisions with each mode of feedback.

The findings were also analysed regarding the uptake of feedback according to feedback focus and feedback form. This information helps illuminate the particular types of comments that are likely to lead to successful revisions. These findings are presented in the following two sub-sections.

### 6.2.1 Uptake according to feedback focus

Table 12 and Table 13 present the students' responses to the feedback relating to each focus area via written and video mode respectively. As previously mentioned, greeting and closing comments were excluded from this part of the analysis as they did not require students to make revisions. The video feedback led to a higher percentage of successful revisions than the written feedback in all categories. The focus area with the most notable difference was content, with only 55% of written comments related to content leading to a successful revision, compared to 89% with video feedback.

Table 12. Responses to written feedback according to feedback focus

Feedback focus	No. of comments	Successful revision	Unsuccessful revision	No change	Deleted text	Other
Content	29	16 (55%)	1 (3%)	8 (28%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)
Structure & development	57	51 (89%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)
Academic writing style	168	125 (74%)	5 (3%)	22 (13%)	12 (7%)	4 (2%)
Linguistic accuracy	242	188 (78%)	7 (3%)	36 (15%)	11 (5%)	0 (0%)
Formatting	4	3 (75%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	500	383 (77%)	13 (3%)	70 (14%)	30 (6%)	4 (1%)

Table 13. Responses to video feedback according to feedback focus

Feedback focus	No. of comments	Successful revision	Unsuccessful revision	No change	Deleted text	Other
Content	19	17 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
Structure & development	35	32 (91%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Academic writing style	62	52 (84%)	0 (0%)	9 (15%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Linguistic accuracy	33	31 (94%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Formatting	15	12 (80%)	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	164	144 (88%)	1 (1%)	17 (10%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

An example of written feedback on content that led to no change is shown in (35). The feedback was given on the section of the student's text shown in "Original text".

(35) *Is this information related to child protection? If so, make the link clearer.*  
(Written feedback on content given to student B2 that led to no change)

Original text

In the case of poor homeless women, the state did intervene legally by arresting women for vagrancy which highlights how the state enforced its authority with gender bias. (Twomey, 1997).

An example of video feedback on content that led to a successful revision is shown in (36). The feedback was given on the section of the student's text shown in "Original text", and the student added the sentence shown in "Revised text" to the introduction of his lab report.

(36) *"The other thing I was a bit confused about is you talked about secondary and primary psychopathy [highlights secondary and primary psychopathy] and I'm still, even at the end of your paper, I'm still unclear about what the difference is. I couldn't find anywhere in your paper where you'd actually defined them. A sentence that says, 'Primary refers to blah, blah, and secondary refers to blah, blah' would make it really clear to the reader what you're talking about, so have a think about that."* (Video feedback on content given to student B7 that led to a successful revision)

Original text

Recent findings suggest that individuals high in secondary psychopathy, not primary, are more likely to partake in risky decision-making (Lyons, 2015).

## Revised text

Primary psychopathy is characterised by personality traits of manipulation, pathological lying, and a lack of remorse or empathy; while secondary psychopathy is characterised by socially influenced traits of impulsivity, poor behavioral controls and inability to plan ahead (Hare, 1999).

### 6.2.2 Uptake according to feedback form

Table 14 and Table 15 present the students' responses to the different feedback forms with written and video mode respectively. As mentioned previously, many comments contained two or even three feedback forms (for example, a directive with an explanation), so these comments were coded as multiple forms. This accounts for the higher number of comments shown here than in Tables 12 and 13. Stand-alone praise and interpersonal comments were excluded from this part of the analysis as they implied that no revision was necessary.

Table 14. Responses to written feedback according to feedback form

Feedback form	No. of comments	Successful revision	Unsuccessful revision	No change	Deleted text	Other
Directive	373	295 (79%)	6 (2%)	49(13%)	19 (5%)	4 (1%)
Model	82	61 (74%)	3 (4%)	10 (12%)	6 (7%)	2 (2%)
Question	67	43 (64%)	5 (7%)	9 (13%)	10 (15%)	0 (0%)
Suggestion	68	54 (79%)	2 (3%)	8 (12%)	4 (6%)	0 (0%)
Explanation	121	100 (83%)	3 (2%)	11 (9%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)
Praise	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Interpersonal	9	8 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	5	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	726	562 (77%)	19 (3%)	93 (13%)	45 (6%)	7 (1%)

Table 15. Responses to video feedback according to feedback form

Feedback form	No. of comments	Successful revision	Unsuccessful revision	No change	Deleted text	Other
Directive	78	69 (88%)	0 (0%)	8 (10%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Model	56	47 (84%)	1 (2%)	8 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Question	4	3 (75%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Suggestion	76	69 (91%)	1 (1%)	5 (7%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Explanation	130	116 (89%)	1 (1%)	11 (8%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
Praise	8	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Interpersonal	10	9 (90%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	1	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	363	322 (89%)	3 (1%)	34 (9%)	4 (1%)	0 (0%)

As shown, video feedback led to a higher percentage of successful revisions than the written feedback in all categories, with an average increase of 10%. Feedback in the form of questions had the lowest percentage of successful revisions across both modes of feedback. The form of feedback with the most notable difference was suggestion, with 79% of the written suggestions leading to a successful revision, compared to 91% with video feedback.

An example of written feedback given as a suggestion that led to no change is shown in (37). The feedback was given on the last sentence of the excerpt of the student's text shown in "Original text".

(37) *I think this might fit better at the start of the paragraph as the topic sentence* (Written feedback given as a suggestion to student A2 that led to no change)

Original text

I have issues with appropriate boundaries, possibly because of the regular conflicts I had with my mother when I was a teenager. My friend Sandra, who I have known for many years, has difficulty managing her anger due to her abusive stepfather. Deutsch, Coleman and Marcus (2006) refer to conflicts in early life shaping how we manage differences as adults.



An example of video feedback given as a suggestion that led to a successful change is shown in (38). The feedback was given on the section of the student's text shown in "Original text", and the student's successful revisions in response to the comment is shown in "Revised text". The areas where the student revised have been underlined to highlight the sections that were changed.

(38) *"In the next section, you did just have a couple of small sentence structure and grammatical errors, so perhaps just proofread this section again. Maybe even try reading this section aloud, often that can help you hear some of the errors. I've put a couple of written comments to show some of them. You can see here that sometimes it's just things like words missing or just swapping around some words, that kind of thing. So I recommend having another close read through this part of the report."* (Video comment given as a suggestion to student B3 that led to a successful revision)

#### Original text

As a beginning counsellor I found this video to be extremely helpful with normalising fears and inadequacies and to recognise my fears when managing suicidal clients. That I must be confident and clear and not apprehensive when asking the client if they have suicidal thoughts in the initial session and check whether there is if there is any inkling and following sessions to see if anything had changed. That it is easier to manage suicidal clients' who are upfront early to help support them rather than later sessions. I gained an understanding that at the end of the day despite implementing interventions a client may still choose to end his/her life. I understood the significance of informed note-taking to protect both client and counsellor, ongoing supervision, clinical support and recognising the symptoms of burn-out which Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson (2001) describe, as imperative for being an effective counsellor when managing suicidal clients.

Revised text

As a beginning counsellor, I found this video to be extremely helpful with normalising fears and inadequacies and to recognise my fears when managing suicidal clients. I must be confident and clear and not apprehensive when asking the client if they have suicidal thoughts in the initial session and following sessions to see if anything had changed. This is because it is easier to manage suicidal clients who are upfront early to help support them rather than later sessions. I gained an understanding that at the end of the day despite implementing interventions a client may still choose to end his/her life. I understand the significance of informed note-taking to protect both client and counsellor, as well as ongoing supervision, clinical support and recognising the symptoms of burn-out which Skovholt, Grier and Hanson (2001) describe as imperative for being an effective counsellor when managing suicidal clients.

### **6.3 Findings in relation to student proficiency level**

The results of the effect of mode on the successful uptake of feedback were further analysed to see whether there were any differences between student proficiency levels. The results of the five students with lowest ELP and the five with highest ELP are given in Figure 11 and Figure 12 respectively. The results show that both groups revised more successfully in response to video feedback, although the difference was greater for the group of students with low ELP. With the written mode of feedback, students with low proficiency revised successfully in response to only 53% of the comments, compared to 78% of the video comments, which is a difference of 25%. This gap is smaller for the group of students with higher proficiency; they revised successfully in response to 86% of the written comments, compared to 95% of the video comments, which is a difference of 9%.

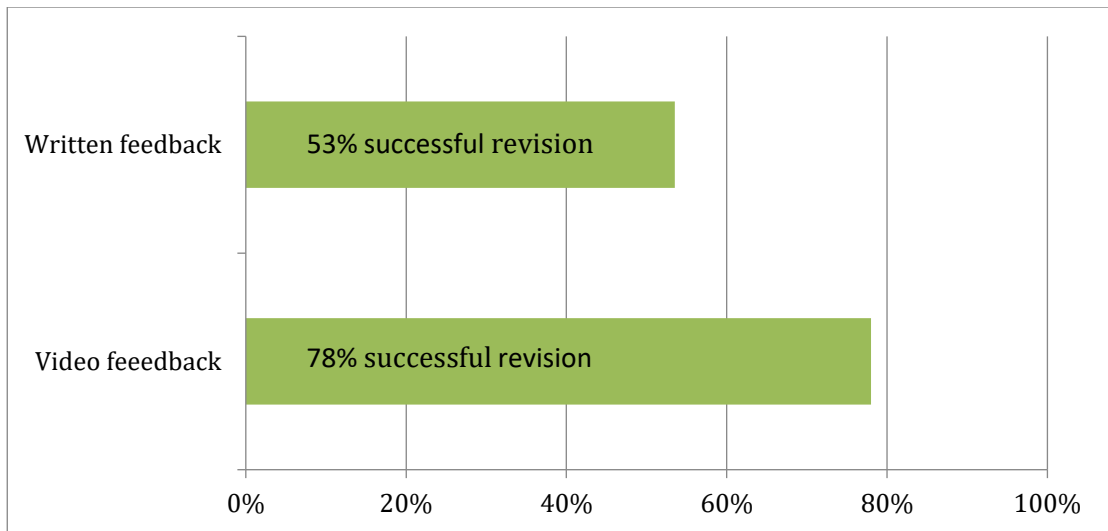


Figure 11. Successful uptake of feedback by students with low ELP

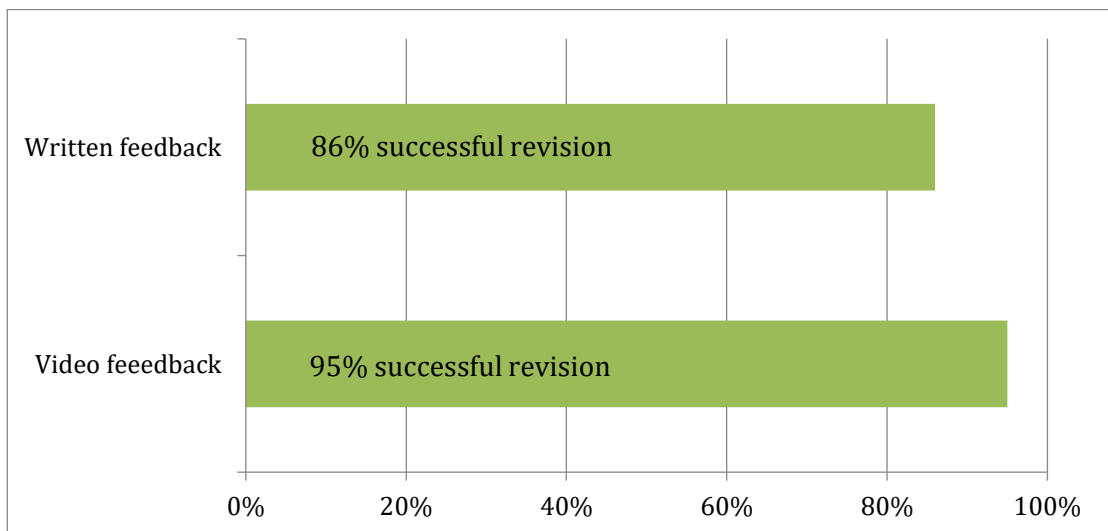


Figure 12. Successful uptake of feedback by students with high ELP

A logistic regression analysis revealed that for students with low ELP, the odds of a successful revision are 5.69 times greater with video feedback than written feedback, which is statistically significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) (see Figure 13). Similarly, the odds ratio is 5.48 for students with high ELP, which is also statistically significant ( $p = 0.037$ ) (see Figure 14).

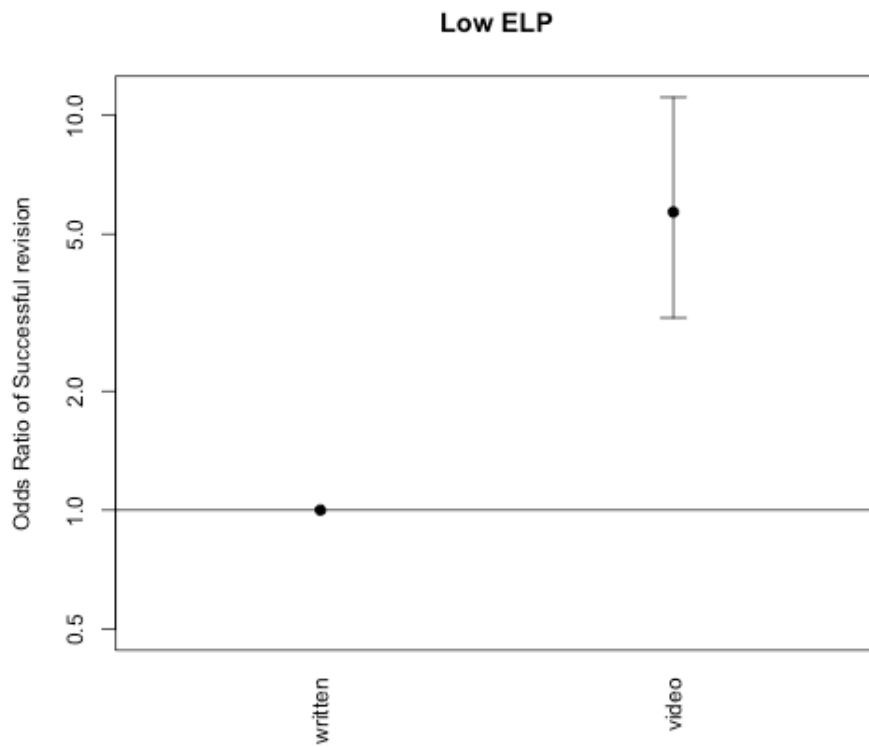


Figure 13. The odds ratio of a successful revision with video feedback relative to written feedback for students with low ELP

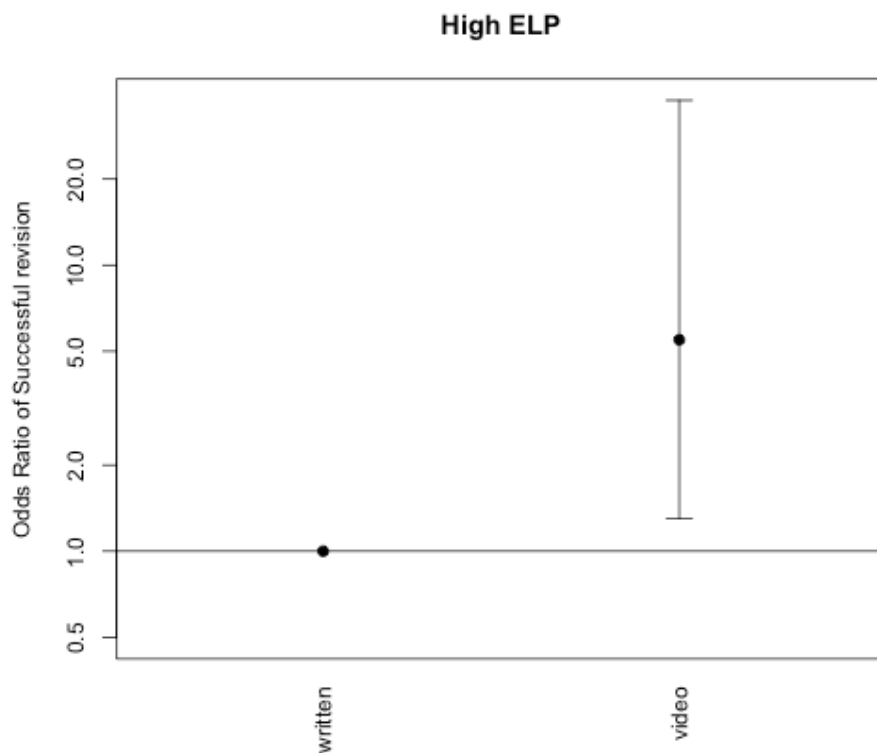


Figure 14. The odds ratio of a successful revision with video feedback relative to written feedback for students with high ELP

## **6.4 Discussion**

As shown in § 6.2, the results of the analysis demonstrate that both modes of feedback led to improvement of the students' texts based on the successful uptake of feedback. In the larger context of ALL support, the findings are encouraging because they confirm that students do make good use of formative feedback to revise and improve their work, no matter whether it is provided in written or audio-visual mode. It also suggests that the feedback provided scaffolding within the learners' ZPDs to facilitate the development of academic writing skills and provides evidence for the notion that feedback can help writing improve when revising. Nevertheless, the results also revealed that the mode of feedback did affect the extent to which students successfully revised their work; 77% of the written feedback led to a successful revision compared to 88% of the video feedback. These findings show a similar trend to our previous study investigating video feedback involving 12 students, where 72% of the written feedback led to a successful revision compared to 89% of the video feedback (Cavaleri, 2012, 2014; Cavaleri et al., 2014). There are several possible explanations for why video feedback may lead to more successful revisions, and these reasons are discussed in the following sections.

### **6.4.1 *The spoken, conversational nature***

One explanation for the higher successful uptake of video feedback is that spoken feedback is more accessible to students than written feedback. As discussed in Chapter 2, speech is more prevalent than writing, and spoken language has a relative simplicity of structure and vocabulary compared to written language (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011). Although the advisor's written feedback was not given in an overly formal or complicated style, the language of written feedback can be difficult for students to understand and unpack (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Wingate, 2010). Therefore, the simpler and more familiar spoken, conversational language which conveys more nuance is likely to have helped students to understand the feedback and, consequently, led to more successful revisions. In addition, the tone of voice and intonation helps to clarify the intended meaning and avoid misunderstandings

that can result from interpreting written feedback (N. Jones et al., 2012). Even though the conversational nature meant the video feedback was more hedged than written feedback, as evidenced by the fewer directives and more suggestions than written feedback (illustrated in Figure 8 in § 5.4.1), the students were able to more successfully appropriate the video feedback as they revised.

Spoken feedback may be particularly helpful for students with low ELP and students whose first language is not English who may find it easier to understand less formal, conversational language. This was something Noora acknowledged in her interview; as a student whose first language is not English and who was classified as having low ELP, she found the spoken feedback more understandable:

(39) *"In the video feedback, as I said, because I was hearing your voice I know how you mean – when you're reading the written one maybe there's times that I'm understanding a bit different than when I was hearing your voice. Hearing the voice I know how you – how I put it in the words – that I can understand the voice of it, of a comment, yeah. Do you know what I mean? Because when you're reading, when I'm reading your comment maybe I – yeah, I did understand your written one but when I'm hearing your words, the way you're saying, it gives me more understanding."*

(Excerpt from Noora's interview)

Like Noora, students in previous studies felt that the voice made it much easier to follow the feedback and to understand more clearly what the teacher was trying to convey. The clarity and accessibility of feedback came through as a key point in most of the previous studies on audio and video feedback (Anson, 2015; Harper et al., 2012; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; N. Jones et al., 2012; Silva, 2012; Stannard, 2008). In Hennessy and Forrester's (2014) study on audio feedback, they found that tutors gave spoken feedback in a straightforward manner, deliberately choosing and using uncomplicated vocabulary. Students in the study commented that this made the feedback far more understandable and overcame the problems that could be

encountered when written feedback contained academic language or vague and unfamiliar vocabulary.

This explanation for the higher successful uptake of video feedback supports the theory that people learn more deeply from information presented in a conversational style rather than in a formal style (Mayer et al., 2004). Although reading and writing formal styles is a key part of academic literacy, conversational spoken feedback provides students with an entry point from which they can develop their academic discourse competencies. It is essential that students can easily access the intended meaning and content of the feedback in order to make meaningful connections between the feedback and their learning and development (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006). Therefore, feedback should be expressed in a language that students will understand (Nicol, 2010b), and, as the findings indicate, providing feedback in a spoken mode can help achieve this.

#### **6.4.2 The detail and explanations**

Another possible reason for the higher percentage of successful revisions with video feedback could be attributed to the larger proportion of explanations, shown earlier in Table 7 and Figure 8. As discussed in Chapter 5, written feedback is highly directive, whereas video feedback is more likely to include explanations and suggestions. This appears to be linked to the fact that a greater quantity of feedback is provided in video mode; as shown in Table 2 in § 3.6.1, the average amount of written-only feedback provided to a student was 400 words, compared to 945 words of spoken video feedback (plus 109 words of accompanying written feedback). In other words, the spoken format allowed the advisor to provide more feedback, so the advisor was able to illustrate her meaning with more detailed explanations which helps students become aware of why revisions are needed and how to improve their work (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Students in a previous study reported that they benefit most when comments include explanations so that they understand the meaning behind their teacher's feedback, and frustrations can arise when they do not

understand a teacher's reasoning (Vincelette, 2013). Feedback containing unmitigated statements can cause difficulty in interpretation, which can confuse or upset students, and the opportunity for learning is thus lost (Lea & Street, 2000). Therefore, without a suitable explanation, feedback could more easily result in an unsuccessful revision or could be ignored which may help explain why written feedback had less successful uptake.

In addition, many of the lengthier explanation comments in the videos restated and summarised key messages, which was not the case with the written feedback. This is likely to be a product of the change in mode; as discussed in Chapter 2, speech tends to include repetitions and recycling of information (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014). For example, in the example of an explanation comment given earlier in (16) in § 5.4.1, the advisor stated twice that a signposting sentence in the introduction was an important alert for the reader: *"This is usually a key part of any introduction and its helpful for the reader ... the educator can clearly see that you've really responded to the task description well"*. Because the advisor repeated and rephrased many of the spoken explanations, these points were likely to have been made clear and explicit to students. It could be argued, then, that the higher uptake of video feedback can be attributed simply to the repetition of information, and, therefore, it would be expected that the video feedback would outperform written feedback. This interpretation would reflect a cognitive perspective with its emphasis on attention and noticing (Rassaei, 2014). However, it would miss the unique feature of the explanations being able to provide scaffolding that sits within the learners' ZPD (Lidz, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), thereby providing support in assisting learners' ability to revise successfully. It appears that noticing in and of itself does not account for the effectiveness of feedback; students did notice the issues commented on in the written feedback as shown by their attempts to revise; however, many of these attempts led to unsuccessful revisions and deleted text (see Table 10). The video feedback also promoted noticing but led to more successful revisions, which indicates that the detail and explanations better scaffolded students' understanding.



The impact of explanations on the uptake of feedback was something that Kris discussed in his interview. Kris, who was classified as having high ELP, stated that he had clear intentions about his writing and was reluctant to make changes to his text if the feedback did not contain an explanation. He stated that he would be more likely to take up feedback that contained an explanation about why a change might be beneficial:

(40) *"If they say, 'Oh you know, the essay might flow better if this argument's there,' then ... that doesn't really matter too much to me. I've already decided the flow is good. But if they say, 'This will make your argument stronger' or, 'This better suits the academic format,' then I'm going to go, 'Okay, yep. Sure.'"* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

He also stated that at times direct comments make him "irritated", particularly on aspects of his work that are related to style rather than being technically wrong, and that he is unlikely to make style-related changes to his text if it is given as directive. However, he said that he would be more likely to consider the feedback if it was formed as a suggestion or contained an explanation:

(41) *"If someone says, 'Look, this is a bit wordy and it interrupts the flow, it might - I think it would work better with this word instead.' I'm going to say, 'Oh, okay. That's interesting. Let me put that word in there for a second and sound it out. Okay, yeah. That makes a bit of sense.' I might still not change it, I might still be pretty attached to my word, but at least that way I understand - I understand why it could be changed. Whereas if someone just says, 'You know, change this.' I'm going to go, 'Well, probably not [laughs]."* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

Explanations seemed to be particularly helpful for comments focused on content. As shown in Table 12 and 13, feedback that focused on content was only successfully revised 55% of the time with written feedback, compared to 89% of the time with video feedback, which is an increase of 34%. Upon closer analysis, it appears that this is because written comments on content were usually short and lacked explanation, which was the case with the example of

written feedback on content given earlier in (35). The student did not make any changes to their text in response to the comment, perhaps due to the lack of detail and explanation. Anson (2015) believes that this is a common problem with written feedback; he argues that when teachers attempt to address higher order concepts such as content, written feedback can be terse and results in ambiguity that confuses students. However, the student may be more inclined to take up teacher feedback if it is explained why a revision is necessary as well as how they may do this, and hence revise more successfully. Video comments on content usually contained an explanation, which appeared to lead to many more successful revisions. An example of a video comment focusing on content and containing an explanation is given earlier in (36) where the advisor explained to the student that as a reader, she was still not clear on the difference between primary and secondary psychopathy. This led the student to add in a sentence to his introduction that clearly defined each concept. In this example, the advisor gave an explanation as to why the content might need to be revised and offered a strategy the student could use. In contrast, the written feedback on content shown in (35) drew the student's attention to a content issue but did not explain why the content needs revising, and the student made no change to their text. Therefore, the depth of feedback may not have been sufficient due to the lack of explanation.

The spoken explanations seem to particularly benefit students with low ELP. As shown in Table 8 in § 5.3, 13% of the written feedback to students with low ELP were explanations, compared to 38% of the video feedback. This increase in explicit support and the corresponding increase in successful revisions (see Table 10) suggests that the explanations in the video feedback provided assistance and scaffolding that aligned well with the developmental stage of these students. In other words, the verbal explanations led to successful revisions because they help situate the feedback within a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Without detail and explanation, the student may have difficulty fitting the feedback within their learning schemata, whereas a verbal explanation that links to a student's current level of knowledge and then

extends it is likely to lead to better understanding of the feedback which, in turn, leads to more successful revisions.

In summary, explanations can help students see the rationale for why a section of their text would benefit from being revised and, therefore, they may be more likely to take up the feedback. Instead of brief comments in the margins, the advisor was able to expand and elaborate her points in the video and this seems to be key to students' understanding of the feedback, leading to more successful revisions.

### **6.4.3 *The personalised feel***

A third possible explanation for the more successful uptake of video feedback is that there is higher engagement with the spoken feedback due to the personal feel. For example, the greeting and closing video comments, which were not a feature of written feedback, included addressing the student by name and this individual acknowledgement may have immediately engaged the student. A range of other linguistic features are also likely to have contributed to this sense of personalisation. As discussed in Chapter 2, in speech it is natural to use more hedges (Coates, 2016) and personal pronouns (Gardner, 2004), which reduces the level of formality and creates greater personal involvement with the student. In addition, the more extensive use of praise and interpersonal comments set a stronger interpersonal bond (Hyland, 2000) and a less-distanced discourse stance (Berman, 2015). Moreover, many of the spoken comments are framed in a developmental context; the use of strategies like hedging and offering encouragement helps position the student as an apprentice and constructs the advisor as a colleague providing feedback of a more formative nature. For students, this may have created a greater affective engagement with the feedback and when revising their work, leading to more successful revisions.

This phenomenon has been reported in the literature; for example, Handley et al. (2011) argue that a student's emotional response to feedback directly affects his or her readiness to engage with it. Many students and staff in other studies

reported that audio and video feedback felt more personal than written feedback (Anson, 2015; Chew, 2014; Harper et al., 2012; N. Jones et al., 2012; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Turner & West, 2013). Like students in these previous studies, students in the current study felt that the video conveyed that the advisor invested effort into reading and evaluating their work and cared about their learning. Kris commented on this in his interview:

(42) *“Just even acknowledging the fact that oh, you know - the educator has actually put in the time and effort to help me with this stuff. It actually feels, I guess, almost like a chat.”* (Excerpt from Kris’ interview)

Nicol (2010b) argues that this can be attributed to the variations in tone of the speech and the naturalness of the approach, which increases the sense that the teacher is interested in what the student has written.

Kris’ comment also alludes to the fact that the spoken feedback felt more personal because he felt he was receiving individualised attention. This was also noted by students in Hennessey and Forrester’s (2014) study on audio feedback; the students regarded audio feedback as a personalised method of addressing issues in their individual piece of work, whereas they felt that written feedback contained more standard or general comments that lacked sufficient detail about their paper in particular. Therefore, it is possible that students in the current study were more engaged with video feedback because they felt it gave them tailored advice.

Increased engagement with the feedback and revision process may also explain why the written comments that accompanied the video feedback also had more successful uptake (82%) than the written-only feedback (77%). In other words, because the video feedback engaged students, the students may have been more likely to also engage with the written comments that accompanied the video.

#### **6.4.4 The audio-visual approach**

The final explanation for the higher successful uptake of video feedback is that the combined audio-visual approach is more effective for learning than written-only feedback, which supports the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2009). The theory posits that information that is presented in multiple modes helps learners process that information better than if it were in one mode only. As discussed in Chapter 2, many researchers who have investigated screen-capture video feedback suggest a link to Mayer's theory (Anson, 2015; Brick & Holmes, 2008; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Silva, 2012; Stannard, 2008). However, other than Cavaleri et al. (2014), these researchers did not actually measure and compare the effect of each mode on students' understanding of the feedback, so these claims are purely speculative. The current study does measure students' successful uptake of feedback, and the finding that video feedback leads to more successful revisions than written feedback is evidence to support Mayer's theory.

This evidence indicates that hearing the spoken feedback while viewing the relevant part of the paper may support students' understanding. Even though the written feedback was provided alongside the text using the 'Comments' feature of Microsoft Word, which lessens the spatial linking compared to providing feedback in a paragraph at the end of a text or in a separate document, it still requires the mental and sequential processing and linking of two texts. The cognitive load is lessened when watching a screen-capture video as the simultaneous viewing and listening removes the need for cross-referencing between the feedback and the section of the paper to which it relates, which may help students to digest the feedback more easily. In other words, this metacognitive process is facilitated through the use of screen-capture video. The synchronous visual and audio aspects of screen-capture align with the dual-processing instructional methods as advocated by Clark and Mayer (2008), who claim that the combination of both the visual and aural channels leads to better understanding and deeper learning.

An example of feedback that exploits the potential of both the audio and visual elements was shown previously in Chapter 5 (examples (27) and (28) in §

5.4.4). The advisor talked through a model reference she had created in APA style that was displayed on the screen and then demonstrated how she found the information from the source that was needed to create the reference. Part of that feedback is provided again in (43):

(43) *"I've referenced that one in full for you as an example. You can see there's the author [highlights author's name], there's the year [highlights the year], there's the name of the website [highlights the name of the website] and then I've given the URL [highlights the URL]."* (Video feedback in the form of a model given to student B2)

In this example, the advisor's feedback was facilitated by the simultaneous viewing and listening and led the student to successfully revise her other website references that were not formatted according to APA style.

Interestingly, video feedback seemed to particularly benefit this student, who was classified as having low ELP; she made successful revisions in response to only 32% of the written feedback compared to 80% of the video feedback. The text that received written feedback was a 1500-word essay on child protection in Australia and the text that received video feedback was a 1200-word summary of the student's oral presentation on homelessness in Australia. Both papers received similar types of feedback that focused predominantly on academic writing style and linguistic accuracy. The nature of the assignments were quite similar, as was the nature of the feedback, which indicates that the mode of feedback was the point of difference that influenced the success of the revisions.

In fact, the multimodal format appeared to benefit all of the five students who were classified as having low ELP. As shown earlier in Figure 11, these students successfully revised only 53% of the written comments, compared to 78% of the video comments, which is an increase of 25%. Due to their low levels of proficiency, these students may have trouble processing large amounts of written feedback (Lee, 2014), which explains why only just over half of the written feedback was revised successfully. However, screen-capture video can help reduce the cognitive load when receiving information, which consequently

helps students to process the information better. Using the audio-visual aspect to offer verbal explanations and visual models to students with low ELP in particular seemed to have a very positive effect on their understanding and subsequent successful uptake of the feedback, as illustrated by the abovementioned example.

Having said that, students with higher levels of ELP also benefitted from receiving and processing feedback audio-visually rather than in just written mode. In his interview, Kris stated that he liked the video feedback because he found it less overwhelming and more manageable than the written feedback:

(44) *"I love the video feedback, because it kind of guided me through the comments much quicker and also, I wasn't really overwhelmed by the writing. Because if you're just looking at this page of text and you've got more text telling you how to change the text, it's kind of daunting and you have to kind of work yourself up to kind of tackle it."* (Excerpt from Kris' interview)

Students in Mathieson's (2012) study also reported feeling overwhelmed upon opening the document and seeing many feedback comments. Therefore, while video feedback seems to particularly benefit students with low ELP, students at any level of ELP may find the video feedback easier to process and more manageable.

## **6.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings related to the effect of mode on the students' uptake feedback. The analytical framework identified four types of responses students made to a feedback comment: (1) successful revision, (2) unsuccessful revision, (3) no change and (4) deleted text. The findings show that both modes of feedback led to high percentages of successful revisions in students' texts. However, video feedback was significantly more likely to lead to successful revisions than written feedback, particularly for students with lower language proficiency. This may be attributed to the spoken

nature of the video feedback which facilitated more detailed explanations and a more personalised feel. The verbal explanations helped students become more aware of why revisions are needed and how to improve their work. The personalised feel of the video led to greater affective engagement with the feedback when revising their work. In addition, the multimodal format and conversational tone of the video helped reduce the cognitive load for students and allowed for better understanding of the feedback.



# Chapter 7

## Student perceptions and preferences

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters presented the findings of the feedback analysis regarding the effect of written and audio-visual mode on the advisor's comments and students' revisions. This chapter will now present the findings of the questionnaire completed by each of the 20 student participants and interviews with three students. This addresses the fourth research question: How do students perceive each mode of feedback and which do they prefer and why? The purpose of the questionnaire and interviews was to explore students' experiences, perceptions and preferences to support and help explain the findings of the feedback analysis. In contrast to the previous findings chapters, the findings and discussion are presented together in this chapter (rather than as separate sections) to help with readability.

### 7.2 Findings and discussion

#### 7.2.1 *Perceptions of feedback modes*

The questionnaire, administered online using Survey Monkey, posed several questions to students about their perceptions of each mode of feedback they received (see Appendix G). First, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five statements using a six-point Likert scale from '1. Strongly disagree' to '6. Strongly agree'. Table 16 shows the averages of the students' responses to the statements about written and video feedback. The Likert scale responses for video feedback were, on average, 0.11 units greater than those for written feedback. The scores were higher for video feedback regarding three items: feedback detail, understanding what to revise and understanding how to

revise (items 2, 3 and 4). However, written feedback scored slightly higher on feedback quality and ease of use (items 1 and 5). The full data tables are given in Appendix K.

Table 16. Averages of students' responses on a six-point Likert scale to statements about written and video feedback (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree)

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Written feedback - weighted average</b>	<b>Video feedback - weighted average</b>
1. The quality of the feedback was excellent	5.90 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.32)	5.85 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.48)
2. The feedback was highly detailed	5.65 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.59)	5.90 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.3)
3. From the feedback, I understood what needed to be improved	5.70 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.47)	5.90 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.3)
4. From the feedback, I knew how to improve my work	5.70 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.57)	5.90 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.3)
5. I found it easy to use the feedback to improve my work	5.75 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.55)	5.70 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.73)

These findings are encouraging because they indicate that students found both modes of feedback to be good quality, understandable and useful. This is particularly reassuring regarding the written feedback, given that previous research has shown that students often find written feedback difficult to understand, ambiguous and not detailed enough (Bennett & Nair, 2011; Chanock, 2000; Coffin et al., 2005; Crook et al., 2012; Dube, 2009; Granville & Dison, 2009; F. Hyland, 2003; Stannard, 2007; Wingate, 2010). When asked in the open-ended section about the written feedback they received, 19 students made positive comments (one student skipped this question), with eight students specifying that this was because the feedback was clear and easy to understand:

(45) *Excellent, very informative and clear to follow.* (Questionnaire response from student B8)

(46) *I found the feedback very helpful and easy to understand.* (Questionnaire response from student A7)

(47) *I think it was straightforward and easy to understand what needed doing/ changing. Very helpful and the feedback improved my essay a lot.* (Questionnaire response from student B7)

Students also found the written feedback detailed enough. In her interview, Heidi stated, *"I just loved to see stuff and the more that was on there, I felt like the more that I learnt."* Kris also stated that he *"was happy with the level of detail"* but didn't want to receive too much writing: *"I mean, at this stage, we're kind of drowning in words anyway. So I don't really want too much kind of words to look at. But obviously, more detail is better than less detail."*

Other students indicated that they could see how the written feedback could feed-forward to other pieces of writing, with one student commenting that *"[It] gave me good guidance for future assignments"* (Student A2) and another reporting that *"It was very helpful and provided information to help in future assignments"* (Student B9). Again, this was encouraging as it indicated that these students learnt from the feedback and were clear about how they could transfer their learning to other pieces of writing, which is evidence of good feedback (Meyer & Niven, 2007; Nicol, 2010b; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

However, a slight concern was that some students used language that indicated they saw the written feedback as being corrective. One student stated that it helped her see *"my weaknesses"* (Student A9) and another said it pointed out *"mistakes I missed"* and *"what I did wrong"* (Student A5), and a third said that *"the feedback on the grammar was very useful to learn how to write correctly"* (Student B5). Although all of these students were, in fact, positive about the written feedback, their choice of words indicates that these students perceived the feedback as identifying and correcting apparent weaknesses or errors. This is likely to be related to the high proportion of written comments focused on linguistic accuracy (as discussed in Chapter 4) and the high proportion of directive comments (as discussed in Chapter 5). This feeling of being corrected

is not ideal, as the philosophy of ALL support is not to simply edit and correct, but to be educative and help students learn strategies for revising their own work by scaffolding understanding. Having said that, the abovementioned quote from student B5 indicates that the feedback that focused on linguistic accuracy issues did, in fact, help her learn, and another student stated that the written feedback "*helped me to focus more on my grammar*" (Student B10). Interestingly, these two students had learnt English as an additional language. Previous research with second language writers found that students expect and appreciate feedback on grammar (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Therefore, written feedback on grammar, which tended to be quite directive, may be a useful way to help students develop their grammatical knowledge within the context of their academic writing.

The next part of the questionnaire asked students an open-ended question about the video feedback they received, and again, all students were very positive. As with written feedback, the reasons for why they liked video feedback focused predominantly on the fact that it was clear and easy to understand, and many students specified that this was because of the level of detail and explanations that were provided:

(48) *It was good to see the visual component and the explanation was more detailed than the written feedback.* (Questionnaire response from student A8)

(49) *The added explanations of why a suggestion was made, and examples on how to change it made the advice clearer, and having it explained in a 'physical' context helped it sink in a little more.* (Questionnaire response from student B7)

(50) *The text feedback was helpful but having a video and audio gave more detail and I was able to really understand how to improve my work.* (Questionnaire response from student A5)

(51) *Hearing the feedback provides a more comprehensive method of*

*explaining corrections or recommendations.* (Questionnaire response from student B3)

(52) *Everything was very easy to understand and I found the verbal detail that went into explaining each point very helpful for me.* (Questionnaire response from student B1)

The detail and clarity of the feedback were common themes mentioned in many of the other studies on screen-capture video feedback (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; N. Jones et al., 2012; Turner & West, 2013) as well as the benefit of clear explanations (Harper et al., 2012; Silva, 2012). As discussed, a common theme in many studies is that students feel they receive a greater quantity of spoken recorded feedback than written feedback (Bond, 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; N. Jones et al., 2012; Mathieson, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). This was true for the current study; as shown earlier in Table 2 (§ 3.6.1), there was an average of 400 words of written feedback compared to 1054 words of spoken video feedback plus the accompanying written comments. The students in the current study detected that there was a greater amount of feedback and a greater proportion of explanation comments with video feedback compared to written feedback, and, as indicated by quotations (48) to (52) given above, these explanations seemed to be particularly helpful to students. This confirms the importance of these comments, as advocated by Ruiz-Primo (2011), and also adds weight to the claim made in Chapter 6 that the detail and explanations that were able to be given in the verbal feedback are key to students' understanding of the feedback.

The abovementioned quotations were also revealing because students tended to use words such as "explanation", "suggestion", "advice" and "recommendation" which indicates that students had less of a sense of being corrected. Heidi also used this kind of language during her interview; she noticed that the video feedback "*could go into more depth about something and explain what I'm doing, perhaps maybe not so much wrong but how I could improve it, so it was really handy for that part.*" This shift in language indicates

that the students felt the advisor was providing them with assistance, support and guidance and enabling students to make their own revisions without dictating. As discussed in previous sections, this is likely to be because the spoken feedback tends to use more hedged, conversational language than written feedback, which helps construct the student as an apprentice and the feedback as formative in nature. This facilitative, collegial approach that gives students a greater sense of agency underpins philosophy of ALL work and is congruent with the Vygotskian (1978) perspective of social learning, as opposed to a directive, corrective approach.

The benefits of the audio-visual element were also supported by the questionnaire responses. Eight students specifically commented on the advantages of the multimodal nature of the video feedback. One student stated, *“It made me understand clearly what I had to do, thanks to the visual and the audio aspects”* (Student B5) and another reported, *“It helped to get both a visual and audio feedback as I enjoyed this aspect”* (Student A7). These comments indicate that students find the multimodal approach clear and effective and support Mayer’s (2009) theory that a multimodal approach to learning is more effective than a mono-modal approach. In addition, the affordances of the visual element for demonstrations appear to be particularly useful to students and support this claim in the literature on screen-capture video feedback (Anson, 2015; Brick & Holmes, 2008; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Silva, 2012; Stannard, 2008).

Alongside the findings related to students’ perceptions of helpfulness, students also rated video feedback more positively on the affective items. In the next section of the questionnaire, students were asked about their feelings after receiving each mode of feedback. Students rated their feelings on a six-point scale in relation to five aspects: motivation, confidence, encouragement, clear-headedness and reassurance. Table 17 shows the averages of the students’ responses about each mode of feedback. The Likert scale responses on video feedback were, on average, 0.14 units greater than those for written feedback, and the differences were greatest for items 4 and 5 regarding feeling clear-headed and reassured.

Table 17. Averages of students' responses on a six-point scale regarding feelings after reading/viewing written and video feedback (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree)

<b>Feeling</b>	<b>Written feedback – weighted average</b>	<b>Video feedback – weighted average</b>
1. Motivated	5.85 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.37)	5.85 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.37)
2. Confident	5.70 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.47)	5.80 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.41)
3. Encouraged	5.70 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.92)	5.80 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.52)
4. Clear-headed	5.65 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.49)	5.85 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.37)
5. Reassured	5.45 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.67)	5.75 ( <i>SD</i> = 0.44)

Again, the results are encouraging as both modes of feedback left the students with positive feelings. This is likely to have contributed to the students' high proportion of successful revisions with both modes of feedback, as research shows that a positive emotional response is likely to lead to better engagement with the feedback (Handley et al., 2011; Winstone et al., 2017). The open-ended comments helped illuminate why video feedback had a slightly higher average rating. Students used words such as “personal” (Students B2, B4 and B7), “encouraged” (Student B9), and “confident” (Student B1) to describe the video feedback in the open-ended responses. These feelings were often linked to feeling clear about what to do as well as feeling that the video was like a conversation, with one student reporting, “*Watching the video was like the person who supported me was in front of me*” (Student B5). This illustrates the power of the personal aspect on the students' affective engagement with the video feedback, and echoes students in other studies who also report that it feels like they are having a face-to-face conversation with their teacher even though the video is asynchronous and, therefore, not a live dialogue (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2012; N. Jones et al., 2012).

### **7.2.2 Feedback preference**

When students were asked what mode of feedback they preferred, 16 of the 20 students (80%) stated they preferred video feedback and four students (20%) stated that they preferred written feedback. The students' preference did not appear to be influenced by which mode of feedback they had received first; of

the four students that preferred written feedback, two had received written feedback first (Students A2 and A6), and the other two had received audio-visual feedback first (Students B3 and B6). However, the student's level of ELP may have contributed to their preference; all of the five students in the low ELP group preferred video feedback, compared to three of the five in the high ELP group, with the other two preferring written feedback. This suggests that video feedback could be particularly helpful for students with low ELP as the 'everyday' spoken language is easier to understand, the verbal scaffolding aligns well with the students' ZPDs, and the audio-visual format makes feedback more accessible and manageable.

The students were then asked in an open-ended format why they preferred this mode of feedback. The most frequent reason for preferring video feedback, as reported by 12 of the 16 students who preferred video feedback, was that it was clearer and easier to understand. Students specified that this was due to the explanations (Students A3, A5, A8, B2, B3 and B7), the spoken format (Students A1, A3, B2, B3 and B7), the high level of detail (Students A5, A8 and B9) and the visual cues (Students A7, A8 and B7). The following quotation captures the typical tone of these comments:

*(53) Although the written feedback was perfectly clear, having the 'voice' behind the feedback was great, and the visual aspect seemed to make it more coherent. Also the added explanations of why a suggestion was made, and examples on how to change it made the advice clearer, and having it explained in a 'physical' context helped it sink in a little more.*  
(Questionnaire response from student B7)

The second most common reason for preferring video feedback related to the relational and affective benefits, including being more personal (Students B2, B4, B5 and B7), encouraging (Student B9) and confidence building (Student B1). An example of one of these responses is captured in (54):

*(54) I feel that as a student I am more involved and connected to the learning*



*process and outcomes. It is a more personable medium and I find the tutor can explain what needs to be conveyed more effectively. This is the first time I've encountered video feedback and it is a great way to humanise tutor student interactions.* (Questionnaire response from student B2)

Responses such as this support the claim given in 6.4.3 that students engaged more with video feedback because it felt more personal due to some key linguistic differences in speech and writing, such as the use of more personal pronouns as well as language that is more communicatively oriented.

These two reasons for preferring video feedback (because it is clearer and more personal) correspond with the existing literature on screen-capture video feedback. However, a third reason was uncovered that has not been found in other studies. Three students stated that they learnt more with the video feedback and felt that this was valuable for future assignments (Student A4, A9 and B9), and this was their main reason for preferring video feedback. Several students stated that the written feedback would also be useful for future assignments (as mentioned in the previous section), but the students were more emphatic about this point when describing video feedback, as illustrated in (55):

(55) *I thought I would prefer the written feedback but I was surprised that the video feedback was even more helpful. I definitely think I learned more from it for the future.* (Questionnaire response from student A9)

This is an interesting finding and could be attributed to the fact that the advisor's feedback aims to have an educative approach, in line with the philosophy of ALL support in Australia, whereas video feedback in some of the other studies may have taken more of a corrective approach due to the different educational contexts.

As mentioned, four of the 10 students preferred written feedback, and their reasons for this varied. Two students preferred written feedback because of the

ability to control the pace of going through the feedback (Student A6 and B6). Student A6 also felt that it was easier for her to read feedback rather than listen to feedback in her home environment:

(56) *I preferred the written feedback as I could go back over it at my leisure. I think it is because I could go back and forth over the work at my own pace and correct things as I felt fit.* (Questionnaire response from student B6)

(57) *Probably because I feel slightly more in control of it ie. the pace of it, or wanting to go back over something. I like things to be visual rather than just hearing them although this wasn't an issue given that the video feedback contained both. I often have a child around when I'm working so something to read rather than listen to is easier!* (Questionnaire response from student A6)

It is not known whether these students were aware that they could pause, rewind and replay the video. Nevertheless, it indicates that these students perhaps found the video restrictive in some ways. One of the other students, Heidi, offered a different reason for her preference for written feedback. In her questionnaire, she wrote:

(58) *Although I loved the video feedback I prefer to visually see the suggestions.* (Questionnaire response from student B3)

She then elaborated on this in her interview:

(59) *"The video feedback I really enjoyed because it actually put - not a face to it as such - but there were words for me to listen to. But if I had a preferred style I'd probably prefer still the visual [written feedback] because it was easier for me to go back and look, as opposed to pressing a play button all the time".* (Excerpt from Heidi's interview)

The fourth student who preferred written feedback said that she found it easier to use when making changes to the text, and also stated that she would actually like a combination of both modes:

(60) *Only a slight preference due to the ease of making changes to the assignment text. Ideally I think a combination of the two is best.* (Student A2)

Other students also suggested a combination of both written and video feedback and indicated a preference for a feedback mode for particular focus areas. For example, student A5 stated, *“I found written feedback useful for referencing and grammar. I preferred the video for the structure and to improve the logic flow of my work.”* and student A4 found video feedback *“really good for content”*. Each of the three interviewees also indicated a preference for feedback for particular focus areas. While Noora preferred video feedback overall, she also wanted some direct written comments with *“an example how I can fix my grammar”*. Kris stated that he preferred feedback on global issues to be given via video because written feedback about ideas and content *“is not going to have the same impact as being told through the video”*. He felt that he did not need much feedback on spelling or punctuation in the video and stated that just highlighting one or two common linguistic errors in the video was sufficient. He also preferred getting positive feedback in the video as it *“would make me feel a little bit more encouraged about what I’m doing”*. Similarly, Heidi stated that she liked different kinds of feedback depending on the issue being addressed. She preferred directive written feedback on grammar and referencing errors that included a model or the correct form:

(61) *“If it’s in relation, say, to a reference, I prefer just to be told directly, this is wrong, this is how you need to do it, and an example. So I get a visual as well, so okay, I can see it and I can then look at it the two and say, okay, that’s what I’ve done wrong. Whereas if I just solely heard that on a video ... it’s not there as a visual. I prefer it as a visual to see that and that way it impregnates in my mind. If it was just on the video I’d have to write it*

*down, and is that what she meant, do you know what I mean?"* (Excerpt from Heidi's interview)

Although she preferred written feedback in general, Heidi stated that she would prefer video feedback for more complex issues:

(62) *"If it's a little bit more in depth and perhaps if I'm not understanding something, as opposed to talking to me on the phone, you could perhaps then just provide a video just to say, look, this is what I'm meaning in this paragraph here. Perhaps on ideas and content ... probably it's easier to convey that on a video. That's where it would be handy, I suppose."*

(Excerpt from Heidi's interview)

Students in other studies also reported a preference for a combination of feedback modes depending on the issues focused on. In Elola and Oskoz's (2016) study, students preferred video feedback for content issues and written comments for grammar issues. Despite this preference for written feedback on linguistic issues, results showed more successful uptake of feedback when the teacher used video feedback to address linguistic issues, and this was the same for the current study; 78% of the written comments on linguistic accuracy resulted in a successful revision compared to 94% of the video comments on linguistic accuracy. However, there were much fewer linguistic accuracy comments with video feedback (n = 31) compared to written feedback (n = 188) which may have impacted on this result. Students in Silva's (2012) study also found value in both written comments and video comments for different elements of their writing. According to the students, global issues in writing, such as the thesis statement, research question, organisation, and claims and evidence were better addressed in the video format as it gave a better sense of the whole essay. On the other hand, students felt Microsoft Word comments were better at addressing small corrections, such as grammatical errors, punctuation, syntax, word choice, and other local problems with cohesion and coherence.

In sum, the overall preference of students for video feedback supports the pedagogic validity of this approach. The two overarching reasons for preferring video feedback, namely because it is clearer and more personal, corroborate previous research on students' preferences for screen-capture video feedback. Several students also preferred video feedback because they perceived it as being more useful for future assessments. Nevertheless, students indicated that written feedback is useful and preferable for some aspects of writing such as minor issues and corrections. This is an important finding given that researchers suggest feedback videos should be no longer than five minutes (Bond, 2009; Harper et al., 2012; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Séror, 2012), meaning that not all feedback may be captured in a video and may need to be accompanied by written comments.

### **7.3 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the results of the questionnaire and interviews, which explored students' perceptions of and preference for written and video feedback. The findings helped explain the findings of the feedback analysis, and they also confirmed many of the findings of previous studies on video feedback. Students indicated that they found both modes of feedback to be good quality, understandable and useful. Written feedback was described as being clear and easy to understand; however, some students' choice of words indicated that they perceived the feedback as corrective in response to errors. Students also perceived the video feedback as being clear and easy to understand, and specified that this was because of the level of detail and explanations. The spoken, conversational nature and audio-visual approach were noted as being beneficial and encouraging. The students' comments indicated that they perceived video feedback as scaffolding their learning which is a strategy at the core of sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and the students' comments about the helpfulness of the audio-visual element support Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. Eighty percent of students stated that they prefer video feedback because, in their opinion, it is easier to understand, feels more personal and includes explanations about *why* changes

are necessary and *how* to improve their work. Preferences for written feedback were related to being able to control the pace of reviewing the feedback and the ease of making changes. Although there was an overall preference for video feedback, many students indicated that written feedback is useful and preferable for some aspects of writing such as grammatical errors and other minor issues, which is a valuable finding given that some screen-capture programs have time limitations and suggests that some issues may be more easily addressed in writing at that point of the text.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

The thesis of this research is that the mode of feedback impacts on feedback provision as well as students' understanding and uptake of the feedback. This final chapter summarises the key findings with reference to each of the research questions and states the conclusions drawn from the investigation. The implications for theory and practice will then be considered. The final sections of the chapter will outline the limitations of the study and identify areas for future research that could build upon this study.

### 8.2 Summary of findings and conclusions

This study sought to explore the effects of written and audio-visual mode on the provision and uptake of feedback by undergraduate student writers. The methodological approach clarifies the actual practice of using different modes of feedback, thus adding to self-report by students, teachers and researchers by contributing more objective and detailed analyses to the small body of literature on feedback mode. The analytical framework that was developed inductively from the data identified, characterised and measured the differences in feedback and uptake of feedback between written and audio-visual modes. The questionnaire and interviews provided further insights into students' perceptions and preferences which helped explain the findings of the feedback analysis.

The findings suggest that the mode of feedback affected the focus of the feedback in a number of ways (research question 1). There was a strong focus on linguistic accuracy with the written feedback, whereas video feedback had a greater proportion of comments relating to content and structure issues, as shown in Table 4 and Figures 6 (Chapter 4). Such shift in focus may be

attributed to comments on linguistic issues being more suited to being addressed in writing, a modality which tends to be direct and less subjective (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011). In addition, a written comment can be placed next to a specific linguistic issue which makes it clear what sentence or word the comment refers to. Feedback on content and structure tends to be more complex and, therefore, it may be more suited to being provided verbally as speech allows for more intricate and 'flowing' language (Coates, 2016; Halliday, 1989). Video feedback also included greeting and closing statements, which were not provided with written feedback, and these statements reflect the more communicatively oriented nature of speech (Berman, 2015). There were also more formatting comments with video feedback. This can be attributed to the affordances of screen-capture technology to give visual demonstrations related to formatting issues which would require rather complex and technical writing. These shifts in focus with video feedback help ensure feedback on higher-order issues is prioritised, which is considered good practice (Meyer & Niven, 2007; Straub, 2000), as well as ensuring there is less focus on editing and correcting linguistic errors.

Results indicate that the mode of feedback also affected the form of the feedback (research question 2). Written feedback tended to be highly directive, whereas video feedback was more likely to include explanations and suggestions, as shown in Table 7 and Figure 8 (Chapter 5). This difference appears to be linked to the shifting in the focus of feedback with each mode since the video feedback on content and structure tended to be expanded and more tentative which is typical of discourse used in speech (Coates, 2016; Halliday, 1989), whereas the written feedback on linguistic issues was usually given as a correction or brief instruction, typical of the more compact and direct nature of writing (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011). In addition, because speech has flowing clause complexes (Halliday, 1989), the feedback could be more easily 'unpacked' by giving verbal explanations and suggestions, which was highlighted as a benefit by teachers in other studies (Anson, 2015; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2012; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Séror, 2012). The spoken nature of the video feedback also elicited a more encouraging



approach as there were more praise and interpersonal comments designed to build rapport with the student. While both written and video feedback had a similar proportion of model comments, a different approach to modelling was taken with each mode; the written model comments usually offered an example sentence or structure, whereas video model comments tended to verbally and visually model a process, particularly for students with low ELP. These findings indicate that video mode is more likely to facilitate forms of feedback that support the core concepts of sociocultural learning theory (as described in Lidz, 1991; Panahi et al., 2013; Schwieter, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). This includes taking a collegial and collaborative approach to feedback by offering encouragement and suggestions rather than being highly directive and scaffolding learning and promoting self-regulation by providing detailed verbal explanations to help students construct their own understanding about academic writing.

The analysis of the students' revised papers suggests that both modes of feedback lead to a high rate of successful revisions; however, there was a significantly higher rate of successful revisions with video mode (research question 3). Of the written comments, 77% led to a successful revision compared to 88% of the video comments, as shown in Table 10 (Chapter 6). A statistical analysis showed that the odds of a successful revision were 2.17 times higher for video feedback relative to written feedback, which was statistically significant (illustrated in Figure 9). These findings corroborate a previous study involving 12 students from a different college where 72% of the written feedback led to successful revision compared to 89% of the video feedback (Cavaleri, 2012, 2014; Cavaleri et al., 2014), although the gap between the two modes is narrower in the current study. The high proportion of successful revisions indicates that both the written and video feedback provided information within the learners' ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978) and provides evidence for the notion that feedback can help writing improve when revising (Coffin et al., 2005). The difference in the extent to which students successfully revised with written and video feedback can be attributed to several characteristics of video feedback: the spoken, conversational nature which has

relative simplicity of structure and vocabulary compared to written language (Berman, 2015; Mayer et al., 2004; Sindoni, 2014); the more detailed commentary, evidenced by the greater number of words than written feedback (shown in Table 2) that explained why changes are necessary and how to improve which is crucial for understanding (Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Vincelette, 2013); the use of hedges, personal pronouns and praise which creates greater personal involvement and reduces formality leading to higher engagement (Berman, 2015; Hyland, 2000); and the multi-modal approach which reduces the load on a single processing channel, leading to 'deeper' and more meaningful learning (Clark & Mayer, 2008).

The questionnaire and interviews revealed students' perceptions about each mode of feedback and found that most preferred video feedback over written feedback (research question 4). Although students were generally satisfied with the written feedback, 16 of the 20 students preferred video feedback, as discussed in § 7.2.2 (Chapter 7), and this corroborated previous research findings (Anson, 2015; Hope, 2011; Mathieson, 2012; Turner & West, 2013). Students reported that they found the written feedback clear and easy to understand and scored it highly in terms of quality and usability (Table 16). However, some of the students indicated that they viewed the written comments as 'corrections' in response to 'mistakes', which is likely to be due to the high proportion of directive written comments (shown in Table 4 and Table 7). Students also found the video feedback clear and easy to understand and specified that this was because of the level of detail and explanations. The audio-visual nature and conversational and personal feel were also noted as being beneficial and encouraging. The four students who preferred written feedback stated that it was because they felt they had more control over accessing the feedback and because it was easier to make changes to the text. Interestingly, several students stated that they would like a combination of both written and video feedback and indicated a preference for a feedback mode for particular focus areas, namely that they preferred video feedback for global or more complex issues that need detailed, explanatory commentary and written feedback for linguistic accuracy problems or other straightforward issues that

required a simple correction or a written model of a structure. This mixed approach was also suggested by students in previous studies (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Silva, 2012).

Finally, the findings revealed that there were several differences between students with low ELP and high ELP regarding the feedback they received, their uptake of the feedback and their feedback preference (research question 5). There was a greater focus on structure and development issues with video feedback for students with low ELP compared to students with high ELP (shown in Table 5), and they also received more model comments in the video compared to students with high ELP (shown in Table 8). The most significant finding was that although both groups revised more successfully in response to video feedback than written feedback, the difference was much greater for students with low ELP. With written feedback, students with low ELP revised successfully in response to only 53% of the written comments, compared to 78% of the video comments (shown in Figure 11). This is a difference of 25% compared to a difference of 9% for students with high ELP. A statistical analysis revealed that for students with low ELP, the odds of a successful revision were 5.69 times greater with video feedback than written feedback compared to 5.48 times greater for students with high ELP, both of which are statistically significant (shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14). All of the students with low ELP preferred video feedback, compared to three of the five students with high ELP. These findings suggest that video feedback is particularly useful for students with low ELP who may find it easier to understand spoken, less formal language, as discussed in § 6.4.1 (Chapter 6). In addition, the higher proportion of explanations in video mode than written mode for students with low ELP (shown in Table 8) and the corresponding increase in successful revisions (see Table 11) suggests that this explicit support provided scaffolding that aligned well with the developmental stage of these students (Lidz, 1991; Panahi et al., 2013; Vygotsky, 1978).

While this study does not provide definitive answers about feedback mode, it offers some initial findings in this under-researched area. From these findings,

some general conclusions and implications for theory and practice may be derived, some of which are discussed in the following section.

### **8.3 Implications of the research**

Although this study is relatively small in scale and exploratory in nature, the research findings make several theoretical contributions regarding feedback mode. First, the study's findings identified different characteristics of written and video feedback that are attributable to the differences in written and spoken language. As described in the literature, writing tends to be more direct, compact, concise and objective (Berman, 2015; Nassaji, 2015; Sindoni, 2014), which turns out to be the case for the written feedback in this study also. On the other hand, speech tends to be more tentative, expanded, informal and personal (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011), which was also reflected in the spoken video feedback, even though it was monologic and asynchronous rather than a live interaction. Therefore, when theorising about feedback mode, the study's findings contribute the idea that differences in the nature of written and video feedback and the students' perceptions of the feedback can be attributed to the inherent differences between writing and speech. The examples of feedback comments given in this thesis illustrate the divergence between spoken and written discourse and demonstrate how different the feedback tends to be in different modes.

This research also contributes to the debate about the effectiveness of different modes of feedback by examining it through the lens of sociocultural learning theory. This was done in two ways: by analysing the extent to which written and video feedback are congruous with sociocultural learning theory concepts and by using a research methodology underpinned by a sociocultural approach. The latter was achieved through the study's analytical framework which examined not only the content of the feedback but also how it was communicated to the student, thereby capturing and representing feedback as a social and relational phenomenon (Vygotsky, 1978). As outlined in the previous paragraph, the analysis suggests that the mode of feedback influenced the language used, and this had a flow on effect on the feedback strategies that were

employed and the positioning of the advisor and student. For example, written feedback was shown to be highly directive which positions the advisor as a transmitter of information or an expert giving corrections (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; Evans, 2013). In contrast, the spoken video feedback was more likely to be framed as suggestions and explanations and was, therefore, offered in a more mentoring than teacher-like manner and tends to position the advisor as a collaborator and the student as a developing writer with agency. What this study suggests, then, is that the video feedback reflected some of the core concepts of sociocultural learning theory including taking a collaborative approach, scaffolding learning and encouraging self-regulation (Lidz, 1991; Panahi et al., 2013; Schwieter, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). These qualities appear to have helped students revise more successfully and thus support this learning theory.

Finally, this study lends support to multimedia learning theory and the effectiveness of multimodal learning. Multimedia learning theory posits that presenting information via both visual and aural channels helps distribute cognitive load for students thus enhancing the effectiveness of the message compared to a single channel of presentation, such as in writing only (Clark & Mayer, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Moreno, 2003). This theory is congruent with the findings of this study as there were significantly more successful revisions with video feedback (which engages two sensory channels) than written feedback, particularly for students with lower levels of language proficiency. This suggests that the combined audio-visual approach to providing feedback, in conjunction with the conversational spoken style, may help students digest feedback by reducing the load on a single processing channel, facilitating their understanding about how to revise their work. The cognitive processing of different feedback modalities is a topic that would benefit from direct empirical testing.

### ***8.3.1 Implications for practice***

The study's findings point towards several implications for feedback practices. One implication for practice is the value of providing video feedback in

conjunction with written comments. As this study has shown, screen-capture video is an appropriate and pedagogically highly exploitable tool for feedback provision. The multimodal format can help overcome some of the limitations of written-only comments and fosters feedback that aligns with a sociocultural theoretical orientation. However, this is not to deny the value of written feedback; as discussed, students in the study found written feedback useful and effective and there was a high level of successful uptake of written-only feedback (77%) and the written comments that accompanied the video feedback (82%) (shown in Table 10). Moreover, the preference for video feedback is not as strong and unreserved as that which has been reported in other studies (such as Cavaleri, 2014; Cavaleri et al., 2014; Hope, 2011; Turner & West, 2013).

Instead, what emerged is that some students favoured either written or video feedback depending on the type of issue being addressed in their writing (discussed in § 7.2.2). There is also evidence from the feedback analysis that written and video feedback mode should be viewed as complementary and could effectively be used in tandem. Based on the study's findings, video feedback lends itself to focusing on higher-order concerns such as content, organisation and structure issues and for such issues that would benefit from a verbal explanation or a visual demonstration, such as the modelling of a process. As well as ALL advising, this could be particularly useful for summative feedback on assessments from discipline educators as students' work is often evaluated on content, use of source material, integration of theory, clarity of argument and other abstract and complex factors. Written comments are well suited to feedback at the point of the text where a linguistic accuracy issue occurs, for providing model structures such as a sentence starter or an example of how to reference, or for providing comments on straightforward issues that may not need a detailed explanation. Common themes in the written feedback could be highlighted in the video, as students in this study found it a helpful way to consolidate and navigate the written comments (discussed in § 4.4.1). Using this strategy would ensure the video gives students a holistic view of their paper that talks through the main issues, where the focus is purposely chosen

and kept relatively narrow to ensure the feedback is manageable and clear for the student in line with good practice (Straub, 2000). Of course, clear and focused feedback is not unique to video feedback; it could also be given in writing. However, what this study suggests is that it is easier, more efficient and more natural to provide detailed feedback and clear explanations verbally due to the inherent nature of speech (Berman, 2015; Sindoni, 2014; Smolka, 2011).

In addition, what enhances the value of video feedback for students is the level of appreciation they experienced by being 'spoken to'. Students felt that the spoken feedback was more personal than written feedback and felt that the advisor had read their paper carefully and was providing tailor-made advice. Students also reported that video feedback felt like a conversation with the advisor and stated that hearing the advisor's voice made them feel more motivated and engaged (see § 6.4.3 and 7.2.2). This confirms the findings of previous research (Anson, 2015; Chew, 2014; Harper et al., 2012; N. Jones et al., 2012; Merry & Orsmond, 2008; Turner & West, 2013), which suggests that audio and video feedback generates for students a perception that the teacher cares about them and their work. This is a significant finding given that good feedback is the foremost quality students desire from lecturers (Winstone et al., 2016), and yet national student experience surveys show that feedback tends to have one of the lowest ratings (Bennett & Nair, 2011; Macquarie University Learning and Teaching Centre, 2014; Nicol, 2010a; Price et al., 2010).

Further, this may have particular implications for those working with online students. As reported by students in this study and others (such as Anson, 2015; Mathieson, 2012), online students frequently feel disconnected from their studies. Screen-capture video could be a way to help bridge this gap when face-to-face communication is not possible or practical and, in some cases, may even have benefits over online synchronous methods of feedback (such as over Skype or Zoom) where there is a need to manage logistics issues such as different time zones and work schedules. Therefore, incorporating video feedback may enhance teaching and learning in an online environment by conveying what students view as more personalised, encouraging, and caring feedback and helping to dispel feelings of social distance.

The research findings also have implications for how to support students with low ELP who are often 'at risk' due to their language and literacy skills. The significantly higher percentage of successful revisions with video feedback for these students suggests that this mode of feedback is better understood by these students (see §§ 6.3 and 6.4 and Figures 11 and 13). Further, a large amount of written feedback can be overwhelming for weaker students (Lee, 2014), so providing feedback as a combination of spoken and written comments may help make the written part more manageable because much of the detail can be discussed verbally in the video. This can impact on the students' success in writing tasks as clearer feedback could help weaker students revise and produce a better final product. It may also lead to improved understanding of academic writing and writing processes which could potentially have an impact on the students' success in other writing tasks.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the study**

Despite the methodological strengths of the study, it is important to acknowledge its several limitations, some of which were purposely placed on the scope of this study to maintain focus and minimise potential variables. One limitation of the study is the small sample size. Characteristic of a case study approach and grounded theory methodology, this study involves a relatively small number of participants ( $n = 20$ ) from one particular setting (a specialised college in Sydney). The college's students come from a wider academic spectrum than many other institutions with a high proportion of mature-aged students and females. Therefore, a criticism of this research might be its limited generalisability. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that the rich analysis and detailed description of the data from the sample, as well as detailed information about the context of the study, will be useful for making judgments about the possible transferability of findings to other settings (Boeije, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is anticipated that the research will have applicability for feedback practice in other Australian higher education institutions that offer a similar type of one-on-one ALL support but may also be found to be useful in other educational contexts, such as post-secondary training.



Also relevant to generalisability are issues around the sampling technique and sampling bias. Sampling bias exists whenever participants cannot be selected randomly (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2013). However, in this case, randomisation was not desirable as it was important to only select students in their first year. This is because first-year students tend to be given a high level of guidance via feedback due to their limited experience of writing in an academic setting, so these students provide information-rich cases. There may also be some limitations to the sample due to participant self-selection. The researcher invited volunteers to take part in the study, and those that accepted “may be different from non-volunteers in their aptitude, motivation, or some other basic characteristics” (Dörnyei, 2010, p.64). Many of the study’s participants are likely to be conscientious students as they had actively sought out feedback, and, therefore, are not entirely representative of the student population as a whole. It would be reasonable to expect a considerable uptake of feedback and positive feelings about feedback from these students. Other students might be conscious of their need for writing support or have been encouraged by their educators to seek support and, therefore, agreed to join the study.

Another limitation is that that only one advisor participated in the study. This also restricts generalisability, as the study examines only one individual’s approach to giving feedback. The kind of feedback an educator provides and the way it is expressed are informed by the individual’s experiences, background, personal characteristics, and values, as well as pedagogical beliefs about language and feedback (Coffin et al., 2005; Goldstein, 2004). Studies have also found that a student’s perception of the feedback provider does influence the extent to which they are willing to engage with and act upon the feedback (Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2005; Winstone et al., 2017). Therefore, it is difficult to establish which of the advisor’s personal characteristics may have influenced the student’s engagement with and perception of the feedback, such as age, gender, disposition and level of knowledge and experience. This was somewhat counterbalanced by the advantage of all students receiving feedback from the same advisor, which would minimise variables related to the effects of different feedback providers. The advisor was also the researcher which

presents some ethical and reliability concerns, as discussed in § 3.7 *Ethical considerations* and § 3.8 *Reliability and validity considerations*. For example, the students' remarks in the questionnaire and interviews may have been influenced by the fact that they knew the researcher had provided the feedback, and the researcher/advisor's own beliefs about the particular merits of audio-visual feedback might influence the type and quality of feedback she gave in either mode. As discussed in § 3.7 and § 3.8, precautionary steps were taken to manage these concerns.

Several other reservations may be noted with regards to the students' engagement with the feedback. First, there may have been a Hawthorne effect which refers to the phenomenon whereby people have the tendency to change their behavior when they know they are being studied (Boeije, 2007). In the context of this study, the resulting uptake of feedback might be due to the students being aware that they were part of a study. In addition, students were required to submit the revised versions of their papers. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this affected students' use of feedback, making it more probable that they actually use the feedback compared to conditions where handing in revised papers is not required. The researcher tried to moderate this effect by not emphasising that the uptake of each and every feedback comment would be examined. Second, it is possible that students engaged more with video feedback due to its novelty value. However, this is the case with any new innovation and could, in fact, be seen as an advantage as it may appeal to students more than more common methods. Third, the findings related to uptake of feedback may be inflated when compared to summative feedback, as this feedback comes at a time when students are interested in receiving feedback because they can make improvements to their paper before submitting it to their discipline educator for grading. In addition, comments on drafts provide an immediate opportunity to act on advice. Therefore, there may be different outcomes for summative feedback or when using feedback to write a new paper. Fourth, it is possible that differences in the assignment types might impact the nature of the comments and likely uptake of comments. For example, it is likely that comments on structure and development would be

more prevalent in feedback on an essay than a lab report, regardless of the mode of feedback, and are, arguably, one of the more challenging issues to resolve than, for example, issues with spelling and punctuation.

Finally, there are limitations related to the scope of the study. This study examines the effect of feedback from one draft to the next. In other words, it investigated text revisions rather than new pieces of writing over time, so the long-term effect of feedback is not considered. Nevertheless, although the current study was longitudinal in a very limited way (over just one term), the results are promising based on the comments students made about feeling that they learnt from the feedback and would use it as guidance for future assignments.

The abovementioned limitations may be considered when interpreting the study's findings, and they also provide a direction for future research.

## **8.5 Areas for future research**

Systematic analysis of the effect of feedback mode is an important, yet under-researched area of inquiry. Consequently, there are many possible directions for future research to expand on the contribution of this study. Future studies might compare and contrast the results of this study with feedback provided by other ALL advisors in other institutions to examine variations, but also recurring patterns, across advisors and contexts. As this research was a case study conducted with students from a particular institution and discipline, further socioculturally-based research with students at different universities and colleges and other disciplines may enhance the usefulness of the findings to inform a broader and more integrated understanding of the impacts of feedback mode. Larger-scale studies with a quantitative analysis would also help to confirm the statistical significance of some of the differences between written and video feedback.

Studies on the use of video feedback with more diverse student populations, such as post-graduate students, or particular types of student populations, such

as learners of English as a second language, might explore whether these students receive similar benefits from video feedback. Because it is likely that English language learners have differing needs for feedback and different strategies for processing feedback, researchers may want to examine similarities and differences in the commentary given to native and non-native English-speaking students and its effects on student writing development. An investigation examining feedback mode and other student variables, such as gender, age and first language would be valuable. For example, while video feedback offers advantages for visual and auditory learners, it may not be preferred by students with a reading/writing learning style, as alluded to by some of the students in this study who preferred written feedback. Research should also consider how video feedback helps or hinders students with dyslexia or visual impairments.

Research outside of the ALL context would also be valuable to determine whether the mode of feedback plays an important role in feedback given by discipline educators on assessments. This would be an interesting avenue of research given that feedback in this context is often both summative and formative; that is, it is often intended both to justify the grade given as well as teaching students and offering students information that they can feed-forward to other assessments (Storch & Tapper, 2000). It would be particularly useful to investigate given that video feedback is ideal for comments on content, structure and more abstract issues which are typical of comments provided by discipline educators where the main focus is on content and argumentation.

A longitudinal study comparing written feedback and video feedback would also be beneficial to determine which mode of feedback has greater transferability. From a sociocultural perspective, becoming more self-regulated and autonomous indicates that development has occurred as the learner has processed and internalised the knowledge from the feedback (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Therefore, a longer-term study may help reveal which mode of feedback better helps learners to self-regulate on future assignments with regards to planning, writing and revising.

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# Appendix A

Admission requirements for the college's Bachelor degrees (ACAP, 2016)

Course	Admission requirements
Bachelor of Counselling/ Bachelor of Counselling (Coaching)	<p>If aged 21 years or older, applicants must complete a counselling applicant screening questionnaire, which asks about paid or voluntary work experience, career goals and communication skills.</p> <p>If under 21, applicants must complete the abovementioned questionnaire, as well as meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum ATAR of 70 or equivalent (65 for the Bachelor of Counselling (Coaching))</li> <li>• completion of a Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree</li> <li>• partial completion of a Bachelor's degree</li> </ul>
Bachelor of Psychological Science	<p>Applicants must have a minimum ATAR of 65 or equivalent, or if aged 21 years or older, applicants must submit a 500 word statement that satisfies the College as to the applicant's ability and aptitude to successfully undertake study of this type and level.</p>
Bachelor of Applied Social Science	<p>If aged under 21, applicants must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum ATAR of 65 or equivalent</li> <li>• Completion of a Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree</li> <li>• partial completion of a Bachelor's degree</li> </ul>
Bachelor of Social Work	<p>If aged 21 years or older, applicants must provide a written statement (up to 500 words) outlining their interest in studying social work/human service work.</p> <p>If aged under 21, applicants must provide the abovementioned statement as well as must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum ATAR of 60 or equivalent</li> <li>• completion of a Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree</li> <li>• partial completion of a Bachelor's degree</li> </ul>

# Appendix B

## Participant information sheet

School of Humanities and Communication Arts  
University of Western Sydney  
Locked Bag 1797  
Penrith NSW 2751  
Australia  
Telephone: 9772 6127  
Email: [enquirieshca@uws.edu.au](mailto:enquirieshca@uws.edu.au)



### Participant Information Sheet

**Project Title:** The effect of feedback on the development of academic writing in different populations

**Project Summary:** You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Michelle Cavaleri, Manager, English Language Proficiency/Team Leader, Student Learning Support at ACAP and a current PhD student at UWS. The supervisory panel comprises Dr Satomi Kawaguchi, Associate Professor Bruno Di Biase, and Dr Clare Power.

This study examines the impact of feedback on the academic writing of tertiary students. The purpose is to investigate what affects the understanding and uptake of feedback. The results of the study will be used to improve the way we give feedback to students.

#### What will I be asked to do?

You will be required to submit a draft of two assignments to Michelle for feedback on your writing. On one piece you will receive written feedback and on the other piece you will receive video feedback. After receiving feedback and revising your paper, you will need to email a copy of your updated text to Michelle. At the end of the semester (after you have submitted your assignments to your educator), you will be asked to complete an online survey about the feedback you received. A small group of students is also needed for a focus group/interview to talk about the feedback in a little more detail, and you will be invited to volunteer to participate. The focus group/interview will be recorded.

In addition, Michelle will use your HSC English mark or IELTS score and your assignments to get an idea of the 'level' of each student's writing skills. This is important information for the study, as it will help us understand the best type of feedback to give for each level of writing. The information about which level you fall into will be kept completely confidential.

#### How much of my time will I need to give?

After you receive feedback and revise your work, you need to email the revised version to Michelle. This should only take a few minutes. The online survey will take approximately 15 minutes. The focus group/interview, should you volunteer to participate, will run for approximately 30 minutes.

#### What specific benefits will I receive for participating?

The results of the study will be used to improve the way we give feedback to students at ACAP. If you volunteer to participate in the focus group/interview, you will be reimbursed for your time with a \$30 Westfield gift card.

#### Will the study involve any discomfort for me? If so, what will you do to rectify it?

There will be minimal discomfort and inconvenience for you. You may be slightly inconvenienced by having to email through your revised work and having to take time to complete the survey. However, the survey will be online and may be completed at a time convenient to you (e.g. at home, after you have submitted all of your assignments). As mentioned, if you choose to participate in the focus group/interview, you will be reimbursed for your time.

**How do you intend to publish the results?**

Only the researchers will have access to the raw data you provide. A report of the study will be submitted for Michelle's PhD thesis. Individual participants will not be identified in the thesis (i.e. your name will not appear in the report) and only Michelle will have access to your information. The findings of the research may be published in a journal article in the future, but as with the thesis, individual participants will not be identified. Please note that the minimum retention period for data collection is five years.

**Can I withdraw from the study?**

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you are still able to receive assistance from Michelle as your Student Learning Advisor at ACAP and you will not affect your academic progress in any way, and any information that you have supplied will be discarded.

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with Michelle's contact details. They can contact Michelle to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

**Data storage**

Your data and texts will be de-identified (i.e. your name and student ID will be removed) and stored securely.

**What if I require further information?**

Please contact Michelle Cavaleri or Michelle's supervisor, Dr Satomi Kawaguchi, should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate.

Michelle Cavaleri  
Manager, English Language Proficiency/Team Leader, Student Learning Support and PhD student at UWS  
P: (02) 8236 8051  
E: 15089755@student.uws.edu.au

Dr Satomi Kawaguchi  
Senior Lecturer at UWS  
P: (02) 9772 6567  
E: s.kawaguchi@uws.edu.au

**What if I have a complaint?**

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H11014.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0905 or email [humanethics@uws.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@uws.edu.au).

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.



# Appendix D

Summary of the MASUS criteria (Bonanno & Jones, 2007)

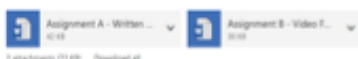
<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>
Use of source material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• relevant information is used</li><li>• data is interpreted correctly; information is integrated within the text</li><li>• text is free from plagiarism</li></ul>
Structure and development of text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• genre is appropriate to the text</li><li>• clear and focused thesis statement</li><li>• critical evaluation of evidence</li><li>• appropriate statement of conclusion</li></ul>
Control of academic writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• appropriate use of grammatical metaphor and nominal group structure</li><li>• demonstrated control of appropriate modality (generalisations qualified where appropriate)</li><li>• demonstrated control of cohesive devices (reference chains, textual reference) (logical flow of ideas)</li><li>• appropriate choice of lexis (language appropriately abstract and technical)</li></ul>
Grammatical correctness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clause structure follows recognisable and appropriate patterns of English (accurate sentence structure)</li><li>• correct subject/verb agreement</li><li>• consistent and appropriate and tense choice which is correctly formed</li><li>• correct singular/plural noun agreement (correct use of articles)</li></ul>
Qualities of presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• spelling generally correct;</li><li>• paragraphing reflects essay structure</li></ul>

# Appendix E

Email to students inviting them to participate in the questionnaire

**From:** Michelle Cavaleri  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 21, 2015 12:56 PM  
**To:** [name deleted]  
**Subject:** Written and video feedback survey

• This message was sent with high importance.



Dear [name deleted],

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my study about feedback.

This email contains the link to the survey. The survey will ask you questions about two assignments I gave you feedback on this semester:

- Your **final essay** for Introduction to Human Services. I gave you written feedback on this assignment (see attached). In the survey, this assignment is referred to as "Assignment A".
- Your **presentation summary and reflection** for Introduction to Human Services. I gave you video feedback (with some written comments) on this assignment (see attached and see link: <http://www.screencast.com/t/HNdIvZ1f>). In the survey, this assignment is referred to as "Assignment B".

Before you do the survey, please take another look at the comments on the attached documents and also the video link to refresh your memory about what the feedback was like.

When you are ready, please click this link to complete the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DXSWZVD> The survey should take 15 minutes to complete. Please read the instructions to each question carefully and answer truthfully.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,  
Michelle


P.S. I am also looking for students to participate in a focus group to discuss the feedback in a little more detail. I will send a separate email about this next week.

**Michelle Cavaleri**  
Manager, English Language Proficiency  
Team Leader, Student Learning Support



# Appendix F

## Questionnaire introduction



University of  
Western Sydney

### Students' perceptions of feedback

8%

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my study. The first part of the survey relates to writing and feedback in general, the second part relates to the written feedback given for a "Assignment A", and the third part relates to the video feedback given for "Assignment B".

The aim of the survey is to shed some light what type of feedback is most effective and what students prefer. It is not a test and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers - I am interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as this will guarantee the success of the investigation.


Please also note that your answers are confidential, and information identifying you will not be disclosed under any circumstances. I will ask your name in the first question so that I can associate your survey answers with your texts (Assignment A and Assignment B). Once I have matched your survey with your texts, I will remove your name from everything and you will be given a code name (e.g. Student A).

Thanks once again!

Michelle Cavaleri

Next

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# Appendix G

## Full questionnaire

### Section 1: General feedback preferences

1. What is your name?

### Section 2: Assignment A – Written feedback

2. Did you read the written feedback you received for Assignment A?
- Yes
  - No
3. Please choose the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The quality of the written feedback was excellent						
The written feedback was highly detailed						
From the written feedback, I understood what needed to be improved						
From the written feedback, I knew how to improve my work						
I found it easy to use the written comments to improve						

4. In this section, there are pairs of opposite words, one at each end of a scale. Please select one of the six points along the scale indicating how you feel

After reading the written feedback, I felt:

unmotivated motivated  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

not confident confident  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

discouraged encouraged  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

confused clear-headed  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

anxious reassured  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

5. If you chose not to respond to some of the written feedback, what was your reason for doing so? (Choose all that apply)

- I'm pretty sure I responded to all of the written feedback comments
- I didn't understand the feedback comment
- I didn't agree with the feedback comment
- The advisor misunderstood what I was trying to do/say
- Someone else told me something different
- It was too hard to change, so I just left it
- I didn't have time to change it
- Other (please specify)

---

6. Overall, what do you think about the written feedback you received for Assignment A?

Section 3: Assignment B – Video feedback

7. Did you watch the video feedback comments you received for Assignment B?

- Yes
- No

8. Please choose the option that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The quality of the video feedback was excellent						
The video feedback was highly detailed						
From the video feedback, I understood what needed to be improved						
From the video feedback, I knew how to improve my work						
I found it easy to use the video comments to improve my work						

9. In this section, there are pairs of opposite words, one at each end of a scale. Please select one of the six points along the scale indicating how you feel.

After viewing the video feedback, I felt:

unmotivated motivated  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

not confident confident  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

discouraged encouraged  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

confused clear-headed  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

anxious reassured  
1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

10. If you chose not to respond to some of the video feedback, what was your reason for doing so? (Choose all that apply)

- I'm pretty sure I responded to all of the video feedback comments
- I didn't understand the feedback comment
- I didn't agree with the feedback comment
- The advisor misunderstood what I was trying to do/say
- Someone else told me something different
- It was too hard to change, so I just left it
- I didn't have time to change it
- Other (please specify)

---

11. Overall, what do you think about the video feedback you received for Assignment B?

Section 4: Feedback method preferences

12. Which method of feedback do you prefer?

- Written feedback
- Video feedback with a few written comments

13. Why do you prefer to receive this type of feedback?

14. Are there any further comments you would like to make about the written and/or video comments?

# Appendix H

## Sample of feedback and corresponding coding

Figure H1. Sample of a student's text with written feedback

**Willing to comply: The effect of confederate responses on levels of conformity**

The willingness of reasonably intelligent individuals to alter their perceptions and judgements based on real or imagined presence of peer pressure whilst acknowledging these judgements to be inaccurate has raised questions previously around the conduct and values of humans (Bond & Smith, 1996).

This study is important in illustrating the varying degrees of conformity amongst individuals from differing cultures, namely collectivist and individualist cultures.

Conceding that the hypotheses of this study is found to be supported, further implications for the occurrence of conformity within cross cultural variance can be prescribed.

Conformity occurs when individuals, alter personal attitudes or behavior to be congruent with the perceived social norm (Oh, 2013) despite no explicit obligation to do so in the hope of staying homogeneous within the group (Wren, 2013). Crutchfield (1955) defined conformity as yielding to group pressure (Wren, 2013).

The propensity to conform has been suggested by some as an evolution in cognitive mechanisms, developed to avoid making errors (Varnum 2012). Conformity as a response to peer pressure has been explored within the field of social psychology for over 60 years. The occurrence of which has been witnessed recently emerging evidence suggesting group pressures have the capacity to restrict individuals from challenging information they deem inaccurate (Beran, Kaba, Caird & McLaughlin, 2014).

**Michelle Cavaleri 23/11/2015 5:11 PM**  
**Comment [1]:** This is quite a long sentence – perhaps consider cutting out some words such as “reasonably intelligent”. If you cut out these words it doesn’t really effect the meaning. Are there any other words you could cut out?

**Michelle Cavaleri 23/11/2015 5:14 PM**  
**Comment [2]:** Only mention your study toward the end of the introduction section. An intro should talk about your topic, key concepts and previous studies first, then towards the end you should bring in where your study fits in.

**Michelle Cavaleri 23/11/2015 3:33 PM**  
**Comment [3]:** Lovely referencing! ☺

**Michelle Cavaleri 23/11/2015 3:32 PM**  
**Comment [4]:** Put this immediately after the previous sentence as you are still talking about the same point (conformity)

**Michelle Cavaleri 9/7/2016 7:26 PM**  
**Comment [5]:** Comma

**Michelle Cavaleri 9/7/2016 7:26 PM**  
**Comment [6]:** This doesn’t make sense – can you take another look at this?

Figure H2. Coding of the written feedback in Excel

PIC	#	Focus	Focus sub-category	Form	Revision
A10	1	Academic writing style	Register	Suggestion, Question, Explanation	Successful revision
A10	2	Structure and development	Overall structure	Directive, Explanation	Successful revision
A10	3	Academic writing style	Referencing	Praise	N/A
A10	4	Structure and development	Overall structure	Directive, Explanation	Successful revision
A10	5	Academic writing style	Referencing	Directive	Successful revision
A10	6	Linguistic accuracy	Grammar	Question, Explanation	Deleted text

Figure H3. Sample of transcribed video feedback

1. Hi, (student's name), it's Michelle here from Student Learning Support. Thanks for sending your essay to me. I've taken a look at it and I've made a few written comments down the side here as you can see [clicks first comment], so you will find this document attached to the email and you can go through those written comments yourself. This video will cover a few of my other feedback comments.
  
2. First of all, overall, your paper is really well written, it's very easy to understand and the structure in particular is strong, so well done there. [scrolls down page]
  
3. With your abstract I think you've done a good job. The only suggestion I would have is at the end here [highlights sentence] after the info about your results is you've talked about future research and generally with an abstract you don't really need a comment like this. That's actually more for your conclusion and you have actually included that in your conclusion, which is great. What's more common is to actually put a sentence here about the implications of your research, so what does your research mean, what's it saying, almost like what's the overall conclusion, rather than talking about future research. So that would be my suggestion there, is to actually change that sentence to one sentence about the implications of your findings.
  
4. A little bit further down [scrolls down] you've got a question in here [highlights the question], so this is still in your introduction, but it's better to avoid questions in academic writing. It's better to actually turn it into a statement, so you might want to say something like, 'A widely held belief is that psychotic individuals are adept in manipulation and deceiving others, but less is known about the likeliness of those who score high, blah, blah, blah.' [highlights corresponding written comment with this model sentence]. So something like that where you're just changing it to a statement, it's very easily done.

Figure H3. Coding of the video feedback in Excel

PIC	#	Focus	Focus sub-category	Form	Revision
B7	1	Greeting and closing	Greeting and closing	Interpersonal	N/A
B7	2	Structure and development	Overall structure	Praise	N/A
B7	3	Content	Content quality and scope	Praise, Explanation, Suggestion	Successful revision
B7	4	Academic writing style	Register	Suggestion, Model	Successful revision



# Appendix I

## Instances of feedback according to feedback focus sub-categories

The main feedback focus categories were broken down into sub-categories and further analysed, as shown in Table I1. With the written feedback, the top three feedback focus sub-categories are referencing (26%), grammar (20%) and punctuation and spelling (19%). With the video feedback, the top three sub-categories are referencing (21%), greeting and closing (15%), and content quality and scope and overall structure (both with 12%).

Table I1. Instances of feedback according to feedback focus sub-categories

Feedback focus	Feedback focus sub-category	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode		
			Video feedback	Written feedback	Total
Content	Content quality and scope	25 (5%)	31 (12%)	7 (3%)	38 (7%)
	Source material	7 (1%)	5 (2%)	0 (0%)	5 (1%)
Structure and development	Overall structure	34 (6%)	31 (12%)	2 (1%)	33 (6%)
	Paragraph & sentence development	33 (6%)	17 (7%)	6 (2%)	23 (4%)
Academic writing style	Referencing	138 (26%)	53 (21%)	57 (22%)	110 (21%)
	Register	44 (8%)	25 (10%)	12 (5%)	37 (7%)
Linguistic accuracy	Punctuation and spelling	100 (19%)	11 (4%)	78 (30%)	89 (17%)
	Lexis	38 (7%)	2 (1%)	14 (5%)	16 (3%)
	Grammar	104 (20%)	23 (9%)	81 (31%)	104 (20%)
Formatting	Formatting	4 (1%)	15 (6%)	5 (2%)	20 (4%)
Greeting and closing	Greeting and closing	0 (0%)	38 (15%)	0 (0%)	38 (7%)
<b>TOTAL</b>		527	251	262	513

# Appendix J

Individual student results regarding successful uptake of feedback in each mode

PIC	Written feedback mode	Audio-visual feedback mode	
	Successful revision of written feedback	Successful revision of video feedback	Successful revision of video feedback plus written comments
A1	17%	25%	8%
A2	79%	100%	100%
A3	100%	100%	100%
A4	89%	63%	86%
A5	84%	100%	100%
A6	100%	100%	100%
A7	72%	60%	56%
A8	87%	100%	100%
A9	100%	100%	100%
A10	79%	100%	65%
B1	81%	100%	86%
B2	32%	80%	85%
B3	72%	88%	97%
B4	94%	100%	100%
B5	90%	100%	100%
B6	100%	88%	86%
B7	78%	86%	81%
B8	75%	91%	96%
B9	72%	100%	97%
B10	48%	80%	86%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>84%</b>

# Appendix K

## Likert-scale questionnaire responses

Table K1. Perceptions of written feedback

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Weighted average
The quality of the written feedback was excellent	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	17 (85%)	20	5.90
The written feedback was highly detailed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)	20	5.65
From the written feedback, I understood what needed to be improved	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (30%)	13 (65%)	20	5.70
From the written feedback, I knew how to improve my work	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	14 (70%)	20	5.70
I found it easy to use the written feedback to improve my work	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	16 (80%)	20	5.75

Table K2. Perceptions of video feedback

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Weighted average
The quality of the video feedback was excellent	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	18 (90%)	20	5.85
The video feedback was highly detailed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	20	5.90
From the video feedback, I understood what needed to be improved	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	20	5.90
From the video feedback, I knew how to improve my work	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	20	5.90
I found it easy to use the video feedback to improve my work	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)	17 (85%)	20	5.70