

LANGUAGE REGISTER IN WRITTEN FEEDBACK TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

Nidhal Qwai

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Master of Arts in Education

Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

© Nidhal Qwai, Ottawa, Canada, 2016

Abstract

Effective feedback, as an integral part of formative assessment, has been identified as a powerful tool that enhances learning. However, “Effectiveness” has been perceived differently by students due to at least four factors: 1. Quantity, 2. Quality, 3. Timing, and 4. Language used in feedback provided. Much research has been conducted on the first three factors, but language needs to be thoroughly investigated. This research in the sector of Education attempts to rectify certain important omissions in the literature of formative assessment in the area of language by using “register theory” in Systemic Functional Linguistics. With ‘register’ simply defined as field, tenor, and mode of discourse (e.g. Halliday, McIntosh, & Stevens, 1964), the not adequately captured relationship between language structure and language function, is to be re-visited (Halliday, 1985) in connection with educative feedback. In this study, field expressed through ideational meanings, tenor expressed through interpersonal meanings, and mode expressed through textual meanings are investigated in connection to how linguistic style affects the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to students. A small sample of graduate students from a Faculty of Education is examined. The systemic coder (O’Donnell, 2002) is employed on collected assignments from participants. Results show that the linguistic style of a professor is found to affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to students on their assignments. The use of the ideational meanings of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization; the interpersonal meanings of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality; in addition to the textual meanings of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis are all found to help students perceive feedback as effective. Therefore; professors are requested to increase the use of these language aspects

when providing feedback because of the hidden positive meanings these aspects can add to the feedback provided. However, the use of the ideational meanings of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice; the interpersonal meanings of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words; and the textual meanings of grammatical intricacy are found to result in students perceiving feedback as ineffective. As a result, professors are requested to decrease the use of these language aspects when providing feedback because of the hidden negative and unwanted meanings these aspects can add to the feedback provided. Results also illustrate that students perceive feedback as effective when this feedback leads to at least one of the following scenarios: improving student grades, protecting student self-esteem, having a good relation with feedback provider, and/or enhancing student learning. Ineffective feedback is found to have negative consequences on students. Decision-makers are requested to reduce the number of students as well as the tasks required in each class. They are also advised to professionally develop professors with training workshops on how to provide feedback.

Acknowledgments

I am sincerely thankful to many people who made a big change in my whole life. First, my thanks to the University of Ottawa, who helped me make this goal achieved. In specific, I thank my committee members: Drs. David Trumpower, Maurice Taylor, and Ruth Kane. With their insights and experience, I am a better researcher, and a better writer.

Let me start with you, David. I really can find no words to express my deep appreciation to all your support during the whole process. Thank you for being so patient, and supportive. When I was almost falling, your confidence in my skills was a big lesson for me that I will never forget. Although you were advised by others to save your effort for developing your career, you were so firm in making your own decision to invest in me. Today, I have made my first steps in academia because of you. This result is an evidence that you are right. Professor David Trumpower, you will always be an important person in my life.

Maurice, I am happy to have you in my life. Your fingerprints are quite clear on all the progress I have made so far. You have seen me when I was a poor writer at the epistemology class. And my progress was obvious at the proposal stage. Your motivating words, which you wrote on the cover of my proposal, are like soft music to my ears. Your in-depth comments on my work as well as your ability to think outside the box, have enlightened and enriched my academic journey. Thank you, Professor Maurice Taylor, for your great effort.

Ruth, I am lucky to have you as my professor in the Research Methodology class, my committee member, and my head of graduate department. You have made a big change in my view to academia. Your comments helped me become a better researcher and writer. You were the first professor to give me an (A) in the course you taught me. You might never know how

LANGUAGE REGISTER IN WRITTEN FEEDBACK TO GRADUATE STUDENTS v

much difference that (A) made in my life. Especially, it came after a critical situation I had in my family. You have helped me coming back on track. I thank you, Professor Ruth Kane.

My thanks are always to my previous MA supervisor, Professor Basil Hatim, at the American University of Sharjah. You have been a friend who gave me not only academic advice, but also support at very critical times in my life. I can never forget how you raised my confidence in myself when I first missed my goal. I remember when you told me that I have the time, I can do it again and I can learn from previous mistakes. My sincere thanks to you for all your support.

I can't forget my family. My dad who is always proud of my achievements. I tell you that I have added one more achievement to the list. You can always be happy and proud of your eldest son. My thanks to my two sisters and my brother for being with me even when they are thousands of miles away.

Cutie, you are my God's gift to me. You have been my patient, supportive, understanding and beloved wife. Without you, my life would have been miserable. Without your help, I would have never achieved this. You have translated your love to me into many things, one of them is action. Many thanks also to my dearest children Senah, Sedanah, Senayah, Caesar, and Selena. I thank you for being helpful and patient. You can always be proud of your dad as I am always proud of you. I love you all.

My thanks to my friends and colleagues who were supportive by sharing their experiences. I have seen that the way to academia is not flowered. I have to dig in rocks, but it seems this is the way with everybody. I thank Julie Corrigan, Kelly Kilgour, Maria Bastien, Lilia Forte and Mohamad Mustafa for their direct or indirect support.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XI
LIST OF TABLES.....	XII
LIST OF APPENDICES	XIV
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>1</i>
CHAPTER TWO	6
A FOCUSED LITERATURE REVIEW OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK	6
<i>2.1. INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2. THREE ISSUES IN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.....	8
<i>2.2.1. DEFINITIONS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>2.2.2. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND THE ROLES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>2.2.3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.....</i>	<i>11</i>
2.3. FOUR FACTORS AFFECT FEEDBACK EFFECTIVENESS	14
<i>2.3.1. FEEDBACK QUANTITY.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>2.3.2. FEEDBACK QUALITY.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>2.3.2.a. Balance between positive and negative comments.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>2.3.2.b. Focused feedback.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>2.3.3. FEEDBACK TIMING.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>2. 3.4. FEEDBACK LANGUAGE.....</i>	<i>20</i>
CHAPTER THREE.....	26
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	26
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>26</i>
3.1. SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (SFL).....	27
<i>3.1.1. FIELD.....</i>	<i>29</i>

3.1.2. <i>TENOR</i>	31
3.1.3. <i>MODE</i>	34
3.2. SFL AND THIS STUDY.....	36
3.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	38
CHAPTER FOUR.....	41
METHODOLOGY.....	41
4.1. <i>OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN</i>	41
4.2. <i>RESEARCH DESIGN RATIONALE</i>	41
4.3. <i>PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES</i>	42
4.3.1. <i>INTERVIEWING PARTICIPANTS</i>	42
4.3.2. <i>COLLECTING THE STUDENT WORK</i>	43
4.4. <i>DATA ANALYSIS</i>	44
4.4.1. <i>WRITTEN WORK DATA ANALYSIS</i>	45
4.4.2. <i>INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS</i>	47
4.4.2.a. <i>First-Cycle Coding</i>	47
4.4.2.b. <i>Memo-Writing</i>	47
4.4.2.c. <i>Second-Cycle Coding</i>	48
4.5. <i>RESEARCHER’S ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS</i>	48.
CHAPTER FIVE.....	50
RESULTS.....	50
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	50
5.1. IDEATIONAL, INTERPERSONAL AND TEXTUAL MEANINGS	
FOR THE WHOLE SAMPLE.....	51
5.1.1. <i>IDEATIONAL MEANINGS</i>	51
5.1.2. <i>INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS</i>	53
5.1.3. <i>TEXTUAL MEANINGS</i>	55
<i>Summary</i>	57
5.2. IDEATIONAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND TEXTUAL MEANINGS	
FOR EACH GRADUATE ASSIGNMENT.....	58
5.2.1. <i>JANE</i>	59
5.2.2.a. <i>MARY’S FIRST ASSIGNMENT</i>	61
5.2.2.b. <i>MARY’S SECOND ASSIGNMENT</i>	62
5.2.2.c. <i>MARY’S THIRD ASSIGNMENT</i>	63
5.2.2.d. <i>MARY’S FOURTH ASSIGNMENT</i>	65

5.2.3. MARK.....	66
5.2.4. ALLY.....	68
5.2.5. SARAH.....	69
5.2.6. ROBERT.....	71
Summary	72
5.3. EMERGING THEMES FROM THE DATA ON EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK.....	73
5.3.1. LINGUISTIC STYLE IS PART OF FEEDBACK.....	73
5.3.1.a. Student Preferred Way of Providing Feedback.....	74
5.3.1.b. Linguistic style and feedback	75
5.3.1.c. Professor linguistic style.....	75
5.3.2. STUDENTS REQUIRE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK.....	77
5.3.2.a. Feedback Justification.....	77
5.3.2.b. Feedback Appreciation.....	78
5.3.3.c. Action on Feedback.....	78
5.3.4.d. Feedback Effect on Students.....	79
5.3.5.e. Feedback Effectiveness.....	79
5.3.3. PROVIDING FEEDBACK LOOKS EASY.....	80
5.3.3.a. Student Feelings.....	80
5.3.3.b. Feedback Sensitivity.....	81
5.3.3.c. Feedback Interpretations.....	81
5.3.3.d. Professor Linguistic Style on my Assignment.....	83
5.3.4. INEFFECTIVE FEEDBACK SHOULD BE CORRECTED.....	85
5.3.4.a. Feedback Format.....	86
5.3.4.b. Feedback Ineffectiveness.....	86
5.3.4.c. Actions on Feedback Ineffectiveness.....	88
5.3.4.d. Feedback Strategies.....	89
5.3.4.e. Ineffective Feedback Consequences.....	90
5.3.4.f. Feedback Contradictions.....	91
5.3.4.g. workshops on how to provide feedback.....	91
5.3.5. FEEDBACK IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.....	92
5.3.5.a. Feedback Goal.....	92
5.3.5.b. Professor Position.....	93
5.3.5.c. Student Role.....	93
Summary	94
5.4. RESULTS INTEGRATION.....	94

5.4.1. BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING METHODS.....	95
5.4.1.a. Ideational Meanings.....	95
5.4.1.b. Interpersonal Meanings.....	96
5.4.1.c. Textual Meanings.....	96
5.4.2. WHEN IS FEEDBACK PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS AS EFFECTIVE?.....	97
5.5. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	98
CHAPTER SIX.....	101
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	101
6.1. HOW FREQUENTLY DO PROFESSORS USE IDEATIONAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND TEXTUAL MEANINGS IN THEIR WRITTEN FEEDBACK TO GRADUATE STUDENTS?.....	101
6.1.1. Ideational Meanings.....	101
6.1.2. Interpersonal Meanings	103
6.1.3. Textual Meanings.....	104
6.2. HOW DO THE IDEATIONAL MEANINGS OF FIELD AFFECT THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK PROVIDED TO GRADUATE STUDENTS?.....	106
6.3. HOW DO THE INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS OF TENOR AFFECT THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK PROVIDED TO GRADUATE STUDENTS?.....	107
6.4. HOW DO THE TEXTUAL MEANINGS OF MODE AFFECT THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK PROVIDED TO GRADUATE STUDENTS?.....	108
Summary	109
6.5. EMERGING THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE DATA.....	109
6.5.1. Linguistic Style is Part of Feedback.....	109
6.5.2. Students Require Effective Feedback.....	111
6.5.3. Providing Feedback Looks Easy.....	112
6.5.4. Ineffective Feedback Should be Corrected.....	113
6.5.5. Feedback is a Shared Responsibility.....	114
Summary	115
6.6. STUDY IMPLICATIONS.....	116
6.7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH.....	116
6.8. CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	118
REFERENCES.....	119

APPENDICES.....127

APPENDIX A:128

APPENDIX B:129

APPENDIX C:130

APPENDIX D:131

APPENDIX E:132

APPENDIX F:134

APPENDIX G:136

APPENDIX H:137

APPENDIX I:138

APPENDIX J:139

APPENDIX K:140

APPENDIX L:141

APPENDIX M:142

APPENDIX N:143

APPENDIX O:144

List of Figures

Figure 1:
Formative Assessment and Feedback..... 12

Figure 2:
Functional Linguistic Grammar, Halliday (1964, 1985).....29

Figure 3:
Language in Social Contexts.....39

List of Tables

Table 1: Research questions and data sources used to address them	44
Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the ideational meanings for the entire sample.....	53
Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the interpersonal meanings for the entire sample.....	54
Table 4: Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the textual meanings for the entire sample.....	55
Table 5: Lexical density and Grammatical intricacy for the whole sample.....	57
Table 6: Mean of Jane's assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	60
Table 7: Mean of Mary's 1st. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	61
Table 8: Mean of Mary's 2nd. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	63
Table 9: Mean of Mary's 3rd. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	64

Table 10: Mean of Mary’s 4th. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	65
Table 11: Mean of Mark’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	67
Table 12: Mean of Ally’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	68
Table 13: Mean of Sarah’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	70
Table 14: Mean of Robert’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.....	71
Table 15: Participants’ first ratings on the importance of a professor’s linguistic style on making written feedback provided on students’ assignments effective. One is not important and ten is very important.....	76
Table 16: Participants’ second ratings on the importance of a professor’s linguistic style on making written feedback provided on students’ assignments effective. One is not important and ten is very important.....	84

List of Appendices

Appendix A:
 Examples on types of process adapted from Eggins, 2004. P. 213-4..... 128

Appendix B:
 Examples on how meanings are expressed through modalization..... 129

Appendix C:
 Adapted from Martin and Rose (2011, p. 271) and Perumanathan (2014) 130

Appendix D:
 Example of Englander’s (2006) work..... 131

Appendix E:
 Recruitment Text 132

Appendix F:
 A list of the student interview protocols..... 134

Appendix G:
 Ideational meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means
 for all assignments..... 136

Appendix H:
 Interpersonal meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means
 for all assignments..... 137

Appendix I:
 Textual meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means
 for all assignments..... 138

Appendix J:
 Lexical Density and Grammatical Intricacy Means for each Assignment
 in more details..... 139

Appendix K:
 Acronym Legend 140

Appendix L:
 The five emerging themes, their sub-themes, and support in literature 141

Appendix M:

Means of each assignment MA, the Mean of Sample MS, and the Standard Deviation SD for the Ideational Meanings 1 and 2..... 142

Appendix N:
Assignment Mean (MA), Sample Mean (MS), Difference (D) of the interpersonal meanings 1 and 2 for every assignment..... 143

Appendix O:
Assignment Mean (MA), Sample Mean (MS), Difference (D) of the Textual meanings 1 and 2 for every assignment..... 144

Chapter One

Introduction

Formative feedback has received much attention recently due to its vital role in improving formative assessment that enhances student learning. Formative feedback, which is widely recognized as the information provided by teachers regarding aspects of the student performance or understanding to correct, encourage, evaluate, or clarify ideas (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81-2), is an integral part of formative assessment. Formative assessment is a “process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning” (Cowie & Bell, 1999, p. 32). Feedback is an influential tool for teachers to use to improve students’ learning (Black & Wiliam, 1984, 1998, 2009; Sadler, 1989, 1998, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

However, the effectiveness of formative assessment in general, and formative feedback in particular, in enhancing students’ learning has been debated for more than three decades (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1984; Crooks, 1988; Sadler, 1988). As a result, the effectiveness of feedback and formative assessment has been defined differently. For example, according to Hyland (2006), “[Feedback] is effective only if it engages with the writer and gives him or her a sense that it is a response to a *person* rather than to a script” (p. 206, emphasis original). Hyland used “writer” to refer to the feedback provider, and emphasized “*person*” to refer to feedback receiver. Hyland is an author in the area of feedback, who stresses the interpersonal relationship - an integral part of this study- among parties, i.e. teachers and students, during the feedback process. Black and Wiliam (1998), for another example, argue that in order to be effective, formative assessment should be motivating. Black and Wiliam are two authors who have published extensively in the area of formative assessment and feedback since 1984. They highlight the idea

that in addition to being understandable and motivating, effective feedback should help students move forward and achieve the goals at the end of a learning episode. For a final example, Sadler (1989) argues that feedback is effective when students know the purpose of the task in hand, how they are progressing towards the expectations of their teachers, and whether students can close that gap or not. Sadler has spent more than thirty years researching formative assessment and feedback (Formative assessment will be discussed in more detail in chapter two). Thus, most writers agree that feedback provided to students can be perceived as effective when it addresses the task in hand, shows students how they are progressing towards expected goals, and motivates students to achieve these goals.

Moreover, some researchers argue that effective communication among teacher and students is a pre-requisite when effective feedback is the intended goal (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Brookhart, 2008; Sadler, 2010). But what is communication? What makes it effective? Communication generally refers to the process of sharing meanings. Its primary function is to generate knowledge about how goals can be achieved. Spitzberg (1988, p. 68) claims that competent communication is “The ability to interact well with others”. He argues that “Well” means accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness, and appropriateness. Communication competence is measured by the extent to which the goals of interaction are achieved. Communication among teacher and students may likely be effective if the goals of interaction are met (e.g., Brookhart, 2007, 2008).

Many researchers believe that effectiveness of written feedback is sensitive to at least four factors: 1. Feedback quantity, 2. Feedback quality, 3. Feedback timing, and 4. Feedback

language (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2006; Brookhart, 2008; Carless, 2006; Hyland, 2003; Sadler, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

1. Quantity refers to the amount, which could range from zero to multiple pages, of written feedback provided to students (e.g., Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, & Litjens, 2008; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Perera, Lee, Win, Perera, & Wijesuriha, 2008; Straub, 1997). 2. Quality, refers to balance between positive and negative, focused feedback, and clarity and legibility of feedback provided to students (e.g., Alamis, 2010; Bailey & Garner, 2010; Bevan, Bage, Cann, Willmott, & Scott, 2008; Poulos & Mahony, 2008), 3. Time refers to whether the feedback provided is immediate or delayed (e.g., Bone, 2006; Koh, 2010), and 4. Language, refers to vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic style chosen by teacher while providing students with written feedback (e.g., Carless, 2006; Duncan, 2007; Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002; Weaver, 2006). Research shows that these factors work individually or in concert in affecting the effectiveness of written feedback provided to students (Agius & Wilkinson, 2014).

Although a plethora of studies have been conducted on quantity, quality and time of feedback- as will be discussed in chapter two- little attention has been paid to style of language used in providing written feedback to university students to enhance their learning. As feedback language plays a vital functional role in motivating feedback receivers to accept and act upon or to reject and act against the feedback provided (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hyland, 2003, 2006), ‘Systemic Functional Linguistics’ theory and ‘Register’, in general, and Functional Linguistic Grammar, in particular, are not adequately captured, and must therefore be reintegrated in connection with formative feedback.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory generally looks at how people use language to express meanings in particular situational contexts and more importantly how to do

things like arguing, entertaining, constructing ideas, sharing information, requesting, expressing our attitudes or making sense of the world (Derewianka, 1990), whereas ‘Register’ refers to field, tenor and mode of discourse (e.g. Halliday, McIntosh, & Stevens, 1964; Thompson, 2004). In the context of linguistics, “Field” refers to the domain (e.g., the field of Law), “Tenor” refers to the participants involved in a communication and the relationship among them, and “Mode” refers to grammatical and lexical choices made by feedback provider. Functional Linguistic Grammar (FLG) particularly refers to the relationship between language structure and language function (Halliday, 1985, 2008). More light will be shed on language in chapter three.

This project on formative assessment and feedback aims to examine how language affects the perceived effectiveness of written feedback when that feedback is used as a tool of formative assessment in adult learning in higher education. In this study, four research questions were addressed: 1. How frequently do professors use ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their written feedback to graduate students? 2. How do the ideational meanings of field affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?, 3. How do the interpersonal meanings of tenor affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?, and 4. How do the textual meanings of mode affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

Language used when providing feedback, and student perception of its effectiveness, were examined in a small sample of graduate students from a Faculty of Education. The systemic coder (O’Donnell, 2002) is also employed and results are integrated. More detail is provided in chapter four, Methodology chapter. Results of this research show that the linguistic style of a professor is found to affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students on their assignments to enhance their learning. More details will be in chapter five,

“Results”. In chapter six, “Discussion and Conclusion”, the role of linguistic functional grammar will be highlighted with more focus on this new addition to the literature in this sector of education by attempting to rectify this significant omission in the area of feedback and formative assessment.

Chapter two

A Focused Literature Review of Formative Assessment and Feedback

2.1. Introduction

The concept of formative assessment first appeared in the 1960s (Scriven, 1967), but researchers in the field of education took some more time to the 1970s, 1980s, and even 1990s to start using this concept after changing the role of assessment to emphasize enhancing learning rather than only evaluating it (e.g., Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971; Crooks, 1988). As a result of redefining assessment, the roles of teachers and students in class have changed dramatically. More light will be shed on this change later in this chapter.

Research on formative assessment suggests that it is a powerful tool in motivating students and enhancing their learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Gipps, 1997; Sadler, 1989, 1998). However, research shows that formative assessment, which focuses on enhancing learning, is sometimes confused with summative assessment (Hargreaves, 2005). Summative assessment, which is usually done by teachers at the end of a learning process, is beyond the limits of this study.

Feedback, as an integral part of formative assessment, is known as a powerful tool for enhancing learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 2010; Weaver, 2006). Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 84) studied the effects of 100 factors, including feedback, on educational achievement. They found a positive correlation between educational achievement and effective feedback - the effect size for feedback was + 0.95. They report that

effective feedback is one of the top five factors that positively affect educational achievement (p. 83).

This review focuses on written feedback for three reasons. First, many individuals may prefer to work on written rather than oral feedback. More importantly, written feedback might be expected to be more effective than oral feedback. One reason for that is that teachers spend more time, effort, and thinking to generate written feedback. Finally, written feedback is more focused as it is one-to-one communication, which targets students individually (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Research on written feedback in higher education, however, is scarce. One reason might be that the topic of formative assessment and feedback is relatively new. Agius and Wilkinson (2014) argue that out of around 2800 articles they have found in seven different data bases about feedback, only 21 articles were about written feedback at a university level. This lack of research should motivate researchers to do more in the area of written feedback. In addition, many university students perceive written feedback as ineffective or de-motivating (Bailey & Garner, 2010). This is another motivator for more research in this specific area.

On the one hand, Literature on formative assessment shows at least three significant issues: the definitions and purposes of formative assessment, the roles of teachers and students in formative assessment, and the effectiveness of formative assessment. On the other hand, research on written feedback shows that feedback effectiveness might be affected by at least four factors: quantity, quality, time, and the use of language (e.g., Agius & Wilkinson, 2014; Carless, 2006; Duncan, 2007; Piccinin, 2003; Shute, 2008; Weaver, 2006). Thus, the more teachers can capitalize on the effects of these factors, the more effective feedback is expected to be perceived by students, and the more learning is expected to be enhanced. The following sections will

highlight the three significant issues in formative assessment and then they will discuss, from the perspectives of both students and professors, the four factors that affect feedback effectiveness. .

2.2. Three issues in formative assessment

2.2.1. Definitions of Formative Assessment. Formative assessment is an integral part of learning, and it has been included in a number of learning theories. It has been recognized by constructivist learning theory (Gipps, 1994), psychological theories of leaning (e.g., Boud, 1995; Nicole & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006) and socio-cultural theories of learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). As a result, many definitions of formative assessment have appeared in the literature (Wiliam, 2011).

Some researchers have defined the concept of formative assessment by highlighting some of its features. Gipps (1994), for example, argues that assessment becomes formative when the evidence it generates is used to adapt teaching to enhance learning. Gipps does not mention who is engaged in this process or when it happens. For another example, Cowie and Bell (1999) suggest that formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students to enhance learning, but the two authors do not mention how or when this process takes place. Moreover, Shepard (2008) stresses another aspect of formative assessment by noting that formative assessment is carried out during instruction to improve teaching and learning. Finally, Black and Wiliam (1998a) argue that formative assessment represents all activities carried out by teachers and students in assessing themselves, provided that the information is used to modify teaching and learning activities by teachers and students. Although these researchers view different aspects of formative assessment, they directly or indirectly agree that formative assessment requires gathering information that is then to be used to adapt the teaching/ learning process in which teachers and students are involved, to enhance learning.

Other researchers, recognizing the main purpose of formative assessment which is enhancing learning, have enriched the concept by describing how it is used. For example, formative assessment can be information and feedback to students on their performance to enhance their learning (e.g., Shute, 2008; Thompson, 2004; Wiliam, 2001). Moreover, it can be effective element of instruction for learning (Wiliam, 2011). It can also be used for engaging students in self-directed learning environment (e.g., Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). Finally, formative assessment can be part of classroom activity and instruction (e.g., Boston, 2002; Wiggins, 2011).

Whether defining features or focusing on usage of formative assessment, researchers do agree on its ultimate goal of enhancing student learning. In this study, we agree that these definitions only complete the big picture of formative assessment and highlight its importance in enhancing learning. Wiliam (2011, p. 9) argues that many authors propose narrower definitions requiring changes to instruction to take place during instruction. Moreover, highlighting the aspects of formative assessment does not necessarily mean contradiction. For example, Black and Wiliam (1998a) underline using the provided information in adapting teaching and learning. Most definitions stress the roles of both teachers and students in formative assessment. From this perspective, the multiple definitions enrich the concept of formative assessment and stress its significance in enhancing teaching and learning. However, Dunn and Mulvenon (2009, p. 9) suggest that a “shared lexicon” of formative assessment among teachers, policymakers, parents and students would lead to more productive communication among these parties.

2.2.2. Formative Assessment and the Roles of Teachers and Students. Before the 1970s and before the dramatic change in the role of assessment from only evaluation and measuring to

enhancing and improving teaching and learning, both teachers and students had limited roles in the classroom. Teachers were the controllers of the whole process. They were the primary actors on the stage. For example, some teachers used to lecture students for a whole period. If students were lucky, they were given the last five or ten minutes to ask their burning questions. However, new understanding of the role of assessment gave teachers new roles to play inside and outside the classroom. Teachers became partners and facilitators. They have become a part of the learning process and not the only part of it. For example, many teachers would assign individual parts of a lesson to each student in class. The students would be given enough time outside class for preparation. Then, each student would facilitate, in class, his or her part under the supervision and guidance of teachers and in front of other students. Teachers would interfere in some cases if a student is stuck or a wrong piece of information is introduced in front of class. Some teachers would take notes during such an activity to close the gaps in students' work if any and to improve their own instruction.

The roles of students have changed accordingly. Previously students were described and viewed as dependent learners as they depended on their teachers most of the time. The new role of assessment views students as more independent learners, who are motivated and encouraged to form a partnership with their teachers in the teaching-learning-process (Sadler, 2009b). Students are another part of the teaching-learning process. Let's take the same example of facilitation previously mentioned, but from the perspective of students. When students are assigned individual tasks to facilitate in front of class, they are expected to dig for the needed information by for example visiting the library, surfing the internet, consulting others, and evaluating what to be introduced in class. By doing all or some of these activities, students strengthen their personalities and become more confident in their abilities. Such an activity helps

students develop their skills to become independent self-learners (E.g., Sadler, 2010). Students might provide new information that would enrich the knowledge of everybody in class including teachers.

2.2.3. The Effectiveness of Formative Assessment. Research on formative assessment shows that its effectiveness for learners depends on the extent to which it answers the learners' three main questions: 1. "Where are the learners going?". 2. "How are they going?". 3. "Where to next?" (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989, 1998, 2010). The first question is expected to clarify for students the standards or goals they should meet by the end of a learning episode in order to pass that course. The second question is expected to provide students with information about knowledge as well as skills they already have and skills to be acquired to meet the goals of a course. The last question is expected to provide the learner with information on what to do and how to get new knowledge and skills to move the learner to the next level to meet the goals of a learning episode.

Furthermore, in order to be effective, formative assessment and feedback should include features to help learners become willing to act upon the information provided to them (e.g., Sadler, 1989, 1998, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). Sadler (1998, p. 84) argues that when written messages are provided to learners, the focus should be on the work and not on the person; feedback should inspire learners with confidence and hope rather than motivating them in the wrong direction where they would defend themselves and act against the feedback provided. Wiliam (2011) suggests that formative assessment and feedback should be motivating to learners in order for them to act upon it; otherwise, feedback loses its function as formative. Shute (2008) notes that effective formative feedback should reduce uncertainty about the discrepancy between

performance and goals, and should be unbiased, objective, and learning goal-oriented. (See Figure 1 on formative assessment and feedback (Perumanathan, 2014)).

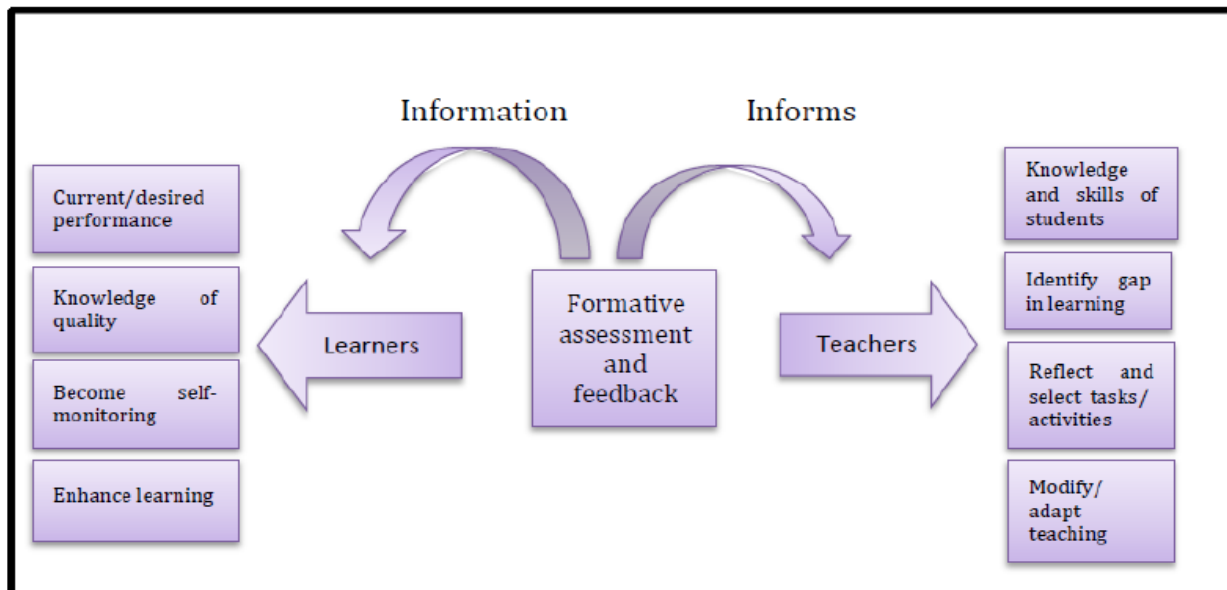


Figure 1: Formative Assessment and Feedback

When it comes to real interaction and communication among the parties involved, i.e. teachers and students, teachers' language when communicating with learners becomes a critical point (e.g., Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Sadler, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). Language enables teachers to identify misconceptions, misinterpretations, or errors and provide students with specific plans to modify these understandings (e.g., Gipps, 1994; Wheatley, 1991). Sadler (2010) highlighted the importance of establishing effective communication among teachers and students, but how language in that context should be used was missing. Black and Wiliam (2009) suggested that teachers use motivational feedback and formative assessment while providing feedback and formative assessment to students, but the authors did not suggest how nor what type of words or structures are to be used in different contexts. For example, how teachers can distinguish

between judgmental or evaluative words on one side and motivational words on the other side. Black and Wiliam (2009) did not stress that motivational words cannot be separated from grammar and context. For example, if a student is at the beginning of his or her task, colorful words may help them to start. Then, when a student moves to the process level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), action verbs might assist and guide them on what to do next. Finally, when a student reaches his or her task level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), evaluative words might become necessary to show students how close they are to the intended goals of a learning episode.

To sum up, vocabulary items work functionally better when they are not excluded from grammatical choices and contextual factors (e.g., Eggins, 2004, Halliday, 1998; Hyland, 2003; Martin, 2001, 2009). After all, language is not only vocabulary. Halliday (1998, p. 2) notes that “The powerhouse of a language is its grammar”.

In fact, feedback and formative assessment is a “genre” (Hyland, 2003). Martin (1985, p. 250) argues that “genres are how things get done when language is used to accomplish them”. According to Martin (1984), genres need to be recognized as purposeful, step-by-step organized activities shared and constructed by cultures. Carless (2006, p. 223) states that feedback is a social process that could be interpreted in different ways. All previously mentioned studies were not enough as not a single study was targeted at analyzing the linguistic style of a professor. Besides, no previous study was targeted at analyzing the effective of written feedback provided to students on their assignments. Therefore; research on teacher language should be re-visited while the area of genre needs to be further investigated as it is beyond the limits of this current study. This study examines, from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics theory, how and to what extent the perceived effectiveness of formative assessment and feedback provided to

graduate students is affected by teacher written language (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1964, 1985; Hyland, 2003).

2.3. Four factors affect feedback effectiveness

2.3.1. Feedback Quantity

Students believe the usefulness of feedback is affected by the small or big amount of feedback provided on their written assignments (e.g., Bone, 2006; Carless, 2006; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). Students dislike short or nil feedback. Carless (2006) argues that students complain about the brief feedback they receive from their professors. Hounsell et al. (2008) researched first year and final year undergraduate students (n=782). The findings showed that the students from both years were dissatisfied because of feedback scarcity. Feedback provided could range from nil or one line to pages. Students become confused because they cannot figure out any rationale behind feedback being short or long. Most students generally prefer to have an extensive detailed feedback. Lizzio and Wilson (2008) argue that students desire to have a long detailed feedback full of explanations and examples to work as an evidence for them that their professors are engaged in their assignments. Professors' engagement in their students' assignments and feedback seems to motivate students to move forward in their learning.

Students prefer detailed feedback to grades. Perera et al. (2008) surveyed 407 third year students and reported that 75% of those students thought that effective feedback is involved more than grades. Detailed feedback for students plays a crucial role as they are in the process of building their knowledge and expertise and preparing themselves to face the real world. It seems that students perceive long formative detailed feedback as a significant feature of effective feedback, which could enhance their learning.

Some teachers provide feedback to their students as this is a key element of teaching , and most of them believe that their feedback is detailed and helpful to students (MacLellan, 2010). However, research shows that teachers' beliefs are different from real practice (e.g., Carless, 2006; MacLellan, 2010; Perera et al., 2008; Wiliam, 2011). Carless (2006) states that time limitations and large classes prevent teachers from providing detailed written feedback. Imagine a professor having three or four classes of forty students each. Every student has to submit three or four assignments during one semester. Some universities have classes of more than a hundred students in one single class. Despite all these barriers, many teachers, but not many students, believe that feedback provided to students is effective. MacLellan (2010) surveyed 39 teachers and 15 students and reported that 49% of teachers thought their feedback was helpful in its details, while only 12% of students agreed. These pieces of evidence show that teachers and students might be on different pages regarding the perceived effectiveness of feedback provided. If this being the case, we might end up with complicated implications. For example, this mismatch could be an indicator that there is no agreement even on the success criteria or the goals to be achieved by the end of a learning episode.

Some teachers believe that providing feedback is a waste of time and efforts (e.g., Tuck, 2012). They believe providing a grade is more than enough because many students are interested in marks. For example, Tuck (2012) reported that many students were more interested in marks, and he added that if feedback had been provided to these students, it would have been a wasted effort. Some other teachers provide feedback just to explain the provided grade. For instance, Perera et al. (2008) surveyed 51 teachers and found that only 19 teachers (38%) reported that they provided explanations for the grades provided. Sometimes even a bright

student- because of the lack of detailed feedback- fails to know why he or she got an A+ for example. Let alone the less bright ones and the low achievers.

To sum up, large classes, teachers' conceptions about the feedback provided, and teachers' preconceptions about students lead to feedback scarcity. Such lack of feedback may become a real obstacle hindering students' learning.

2.3.2. Feedback Quality

Just as quantity affects the effectiveness of written feedback provided to students, quality affects it as well. Quality of written feedback is driven by at least two main issues: the balance between negative and positive comments, and feedback focus (Agius & Wilkinson, 2014).

2.3.2.a. Balance between positive and negative comments. Most students perceive feedback as unhelpful when they realize that the balance between its positive and negative comments is unequal (e.g., Alamis, 2010; Duncan, 2007; Higgins et al., 2002; Mahony, 2008; Weaver, 2006). Overly negative feedback can become demoralizing. For instance, Weaver (2006) surveyed 34 students. 40% of them reported that they felt demoralized by the negative comments provided on their assignments and all of the 34 participants preferred to have positive comments. Teachers can come up with better strategies other than using the "ego-oriented or performance-oriented feedback" (Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 24), which generally refers to the feedback directed to the self or the performance of person rather than the feedback directed to the task in hand. For example, a feedback point like "You have not thought of the implications of this part on your study" would carry negative hidden messages and connotations as it puts value on the

performance of a student. The same example could be directed to the task by, for example, using the strategy of questioning as in “What are the implications of this part on the whole study?”. Thus, “ego-oriented feedback” is to be avoided. Such feedback does not only demoralize and demotivate students (Butler, 1987), but it also provokes them to protect themselves rather than improve their learning. In her study, Alamis (2010) argued that 92 out of 121 students who participated in her study expected both positive and critical feedback on their work. Similarly, Poulos and Mahony (2008) stated that dominance of negative feedback had a demoralizing effect on students, which hinders their learning.

Research is scarce on teachers’ views regarding balance between positive and negative comments of written feedback (Agius & Wilkinson, 2014). Most studies mention this issue only indirectly. However, many teachers seem to be aware of the role of their positive written feedback in motivating students to continue learning. Bailey and Garner (2010) argue that teachers recognized the value of positive comments. As explained previously, the positive or critical feedback is to be directed to the task rather than the ego or performance of students.

Some teachers’ beliefs about positive and negative feedback contradict their practices. For example, Orrell (2006) observed, interviewed, and analyzed the work of 16 experienced markers. She found a mismatch between their beliefs and practices. Their written feedback was to justify the given marks, but they thought they were highlighting the students’ improvements. Moreover, Orrell (2006) argues that although assessors in her study focused on students’ understanding at the point of grading understanding. Assessors did not refer to it in their written feedback, which mainly focused on teaching actual content and editing presentation features. She believes that these attributes might be more easily explained to students to justify the grade provided. Moreover, Orrell (2006) claims that the absence of the opportunity for students to act

on the feedback provided -like re-doing the task to show their understanding of the provided suggestions- is evidence that assessment and feedback, in these contexts, is not formative. It is no more than a justification of the grade provided. Finally, Orrell (2006) reported that the agreement between academics' assessment behavior and their beliefs in her study was only 22%. Agreement was common in reference to submitting grades to institution.

It seems some teachers lack professional training to fill the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices. Teacher-student communication can reduce the effects of negative feedback on students. Carless (2006, p. 231) suggests that teachers' failing to find time for dialogue with students "may engender negative consequences" on students such as dissatisfaction or underachievement. The motivating role of positive feedback, filling the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices on feedback, and dialogue with students are suggested solutions. This motivating dialogue can assist teachers to balance positive and negative written feedback and improve learning.

2.3.2.b. Focused Feedback. Many students believe that focused feedback is a primary condition for feedback to be effective. They find generalized feedback ineffective. For instance, Duers and Brown (2009, p. 657) report that students perceived general phrases like "Work on this" or "Weak section" as ineffective for them. Such phrases lack effectiveness because they fail to suggest any strategies for improving or moving forward in learning. Students preferred focused feedback. Straub (1997) researched 142 first-year students and found that these students also strongly preferred focused comments. Thus replacing the general feedback with a more focused one seems to help students move forward and improve their learning.

However, some obstacles may prevent teachers from providing focused feedback. Timely feedback is a pressure on teachers. Bailey and Garner (2010) argue that institutional

pressure on professors to give timely feedback resulted in the cut-and-pasted format of feedback. As a result, feedback became brief, general, and ineffective. In addition, some professors failed to see feedback as a learning tool, but they have to do it for some other concerns, for instance, accreditation issues or students' appeal. Carless (2006) notes that some professors provide feedback because accreditation committees might check out student papers. Or a student might appeal and ask for a justification of his or her mark. Finally, large classes also make it hard for teachers to provide focused feedback (Agius & Wilkinson, 2010). Thus, timely feedback, professors' conceptions, and large classes prevent many professors from providing the feedback that many students wish to see on their assignments. These are examples of the obstacles that can hinder students' learning.

2.3.3. Feedback Timing

Many students believe that feedback timing affects its effectiveness. Although some professors provide students with a summative feedback at the end of a task, many students prefer to have formative feedback during a task. For example, Bone (2006) notes that students are in favor of formative feedback. It takes place while learning continues rather than to have a summative one at the end of a learning episode. Similar results have been found by (Duncan, 2007). Providing feedback during a task is a logical learning strategy. Research shows that students lose interest (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and motivation (Black & Wiliam, 2009) once the task in hand is completed or the grade is given.

Many teachers also believe that formative feedback is more effective for students than summative feedback. For example, teachers are in favor of prompt feedback to benefit students (e.g., Bailey & Garner, 2010; Bevan et al., 2008). In addition, Koh (2010) finds similar results

and states that teachers found summative feedback was given too late for students to act on. Therefore; teachers attributed less time to it.

2. 3.4. Feedback Language

Many university students complain that they fail to understand the written feedback provided on their assignments because of their professors' linguistic style (e.g., Bailey & Garner, 2010; Carless, 2006). The use of specific terminology and abbreviations hinder understanding. Some students report that one main reason for not understanding written feedback is the use of academic terminologies. They prefer oral feedback as it can be easily interpreted (e.g., Higgins et al., 2002; Duncan, 2007; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). In addition, some students complain that they cannot decipher the handwriting of their professors on their assignments (Carless, 2006). Thus, using oral feedback to help students decode terminologies and abbreviations and decipher the handwriting on their written assignments could be a successful strategy for both teachers and students. Although such a strategy is time and effort consuming for all parties, it could help teachers and students accomplish better results in enhancing students' learning.

In realizing the previously mentioned problems, many teachers may be divided into at least two categories: 1) Some teachers recognize such problems and may help students avoid them. For example, assessment criteria and goals of a learning episode can be discussed with students in detail at the beginning of learning. Such discussion ensures that many students understand terminologies and expectations. 2) Some other teachers do not comprehend such problems. On the one hand, research shows that some teachers do realize that many students have difficulty in understanding assessment criteria and the goals of a learning episode. But they provide no help to such students in this regard. For instance, Koh (2010) interviewed 20 nurse educators. They believed that using assessment and marking criteria terminology helped students

understand the targeted standard. However, these educators report that the success criteria were not explained to students. Moreover, some teachers might find it difficult to elucidate their expectations for various reasons. Carless (2006) finds a mismatch between students' perceptions and teachers' perceptions regarding the assessment criteria. Bailey and Garner (2010) note that their educator participants still resorted to using technical terminology due to time pressure. These two studies of Koh (2010) and Bailey and Garner (2010) provide evidence that students find difficulty in understanding the academic discourse. Such discourse needs to be explained and simplified to students.

On the other hand, research shows that many teachers seem to be unaware of the effects of their linguistic style when they provide written feedback on students' assignments. Students prefer advice to imperative structures. For example, Alamis (2010) reports that participants in her study showed resistance in taking forward actions towards learning when advice was worded to them in the form of imperative rather than suggestion. Straub (1997) reports similar results.

The above mentioned findings remind us of the idea of ego-protection (Black & Wiliam, 2009). When students feel insulted by the language used on their assignments, they act to protect their egos instead of improving their learning (Wiliam, 2011). In addition, students want a model to follow after at the end of a learning episode. Poulos and Mahony (2008) reported that students wanted not only the feedback that improves their grades, but also their practice after graduation. This is an educational aim, which is teaching good habits and practices. It is an opportunity to be seized by many professors to set a practical model for students to follow especially after students leave school.

No matter how specific, timely, and large in amount the feedback provided is, many students can be expected to act against it if it is not provided to them in a motivating and

appropriate way (Black & Wiliam, 2009). An appropriate way would be -for example- employing the language of suggestion rather than imperative. Choosing motivating language is one strategy that might help in achieving such a goal (Wiliam, 2011). Thus, the choices of appropriate structures, vocabulary, and how they are arranged according to the context, are three significant aspects of language that may affect feedback. As a result, communication among teachers and students might end up as competent or incompetent.

Communication, which refers to the process of sharing meanings, becomes competent when a speaker/writer has the ability to interact well with others (Spitzberg, 1988). He argues that “Well” means accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness, and appropriateness. Cody and McLaughlin (1985) argue that communicative competence is sensitive to the context in which it takes place. In other words, if a communication is perceived as competent with one group in one situation, it could be perceived as incompetent with some other group in another situation.

For assessing a text or a written communication, De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 11) claim that in order to be considered communicative, a text has to meet at least seven standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality. 1. Cohesion refers to the way the words in a text are mutually connected within a sequence based on grammatical norms and conventions that allow meanings to exist within the text. 2. Coherence goes deeper than cohesion. Coherence is concerned with the construction and connections of concepts, for example, action, causality, location, or time. 3. Intentionality refers to the producer’s intentions in a text in terms of attitude, plan, and goals communicated in a cohesive and coherent fashion. 4. Acceptability is the willingness of the

receiver to accept a text as communicative, relevant and useful, and his or her desire to obtain information. 5. Informativity refers to the known, the predictable, the informative, or the expected vs. the unknown, the unpredictable, the uninformative, or the unexpected nature of texts. 6. Situationality holds that certain factors make texts relevant to a given situation or occurrence, for example, the role of context in communication. 7. Intertextuality refers to the sense-making of a text in relation to prior texts, as all texts rely on other texts to some degree. These seven standards function as constitutive principles of communication and if all of them are not met, then a text will be seen as a “non-text” and regarded as uncommunicative (1981, p. 3).

Moreover, De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 11) also distinguish three regulative principles of text that control textual communication. The *efficiency* of a text is the ease with which communication is accomplished. The *effectiveness* of a text refers to the impression the text leaves with regards to achieving a specific goal. And the *appropriateness* of a text is determined by the relation between the setting of the text and sticking to textuality standards. The following section will shed light only on effectiveness, and appropriateness as they lie at the core of this study.

In a competent communication, effectiveness and appropriateness are two primary components (Canary & Spitzberg, 1989). While appropriateness involves adherence to social norms, effectiveness occurs when goals set for the communication interaction are fulfilled. Thus, competent communication is a product of both appropriateness and effectiveness (Westmyer, Dicioccio, & Rubin, 1998). Canary and Spitzberg (1989, p. 631) argue that “The more appropriate and effective an interactant is, the more competent he or she is likely to be perceived”. However, Canary and Spitzberg (1989) report that actors base their perceptions of competent communication on effectiveness, while observers perceive the actors’ competence in

relation to appropriateness. Thus, when actors may feel that they have achieved their goals, observers may feel the actors have violated social rules. That is why both appropriateness and effectiveness are required if our intended goal is a competent communication.

In assessment, some researchers stress the role of effective communication, which leads to effective feedback among teacher and students (e.g., Brookhart, 2007, 2008; Sadler, 2009, 2010). However, whether these researchers have used “effectiveness” interchangeably with “competence”, or they have highlighted “effectiveness” as a crucial part in communication, these researchers, in both scenarios, have missed the roles of other criteria for assessing competence and the seven standards of textuality (e.g., De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Canary & Spitzberg, 1989). Moreover, these researchers did not suggest what effective communication should look like.

In summary, although there is reason to believe that teachers’ linguistic styles and their linguistic choices of grammar and vocabulary used in communicating with students in written feedback affect students’ learning, a clearer understanding of how language affects learning is required. In a recent review of 21 studies available on the topic of written feedback (Agius & Wilkinson, 2014), the majority of these studies were qualitative (n=11). Some used both qualitative and quantitative methods (n=8). In addition, two studies used quantitative methods. Only three studies reported using probability sampling (Perera et al., 2008; Duers & Brown, 2009; Orsmond & Merry, 2011). Furthermore, four studies reported using pilot work (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Duers & Brown, 2009; Alamis, 2010; MacLellan, 2010).

However, all these previous studies were not enough as one can find no single study that was aimed to examine the functional language of written feedback or how language specifically affects written feedback. Most of the previous studies focused on quality, quantity or

timing of feedback. Few studies, which targeted language, were not focusing on the function of written language. Bailey and Garner(2010) reported that the use of specific terminology and abbreviations hinder understanding. Carless (2006) found that some students reported that one main reason for not understanding written feedback was the use of academic terminologies. Some students preferred oral feedback as it, unlike written feedback, can be easily interpreted (e.g., Higgins et al., 2002; Duncan, 2007; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). Some students complained that they cannot decipher the handwriting of their professors on their assignments (Carless, 2006). All these studies were not enough as language functionality is still missing. In this study, the goal is to measure the perceived effectiveness of written feedback language by measuring the perceived appropriateness of that language. For this goal, the Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory (Halliday, 1964; 1985) will be employed. The following chapter will shed light on this theory.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine how the linguistic style of feedback provider affects the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students on their assignments to enhance their learning. To achieve this goal, two stages will be developed. A. Employing the systemic coder of O'Donnell (2002) for which written assignments with written feedback points on them will be collected from participants for analysis in the decoder. The scheme in the decoder will be built to investigate the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. B. Stage two will be interviewing the participants who submitted their assignments to talk about these assignments to figure out how feedback effectiveness is affected.

As previously noted, the literature review on formative assessment and feedback showed that there are at least four factors that affect the effectiveness of formative assessment and feedback. They are quantity, quality, time and language. The type of language used in feedback providing has not been a factor that has received much attention. In this study, the plan is to examine the effect of various aspects of language, as described by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and the Theory of Register, used in written feedback provided.

This qualitative study adopts the systemic functional linguistics framework (Halliday, 1964, 1985), and it employs the "Theory of Register" of discourse analysis, as in Englander (2006), to examine how the linguistic style of a teacher affects the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students on their assignments. This is a descriptive study about the effects of linguistic, syntactical, and grammatical language levels that may affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback.

3.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic functional linguistics works with “how people use real language for real purposes” (Derewianka, 1990, p. 4). It is a theory developed by Halliday (1964; 1985, 2008, 2011), who was influenced by the essentially Saussurean idea that linguistics should focus on contemporary language synchronically, rather than diachronically (Halliday, 1978). But the bulk of Halliday’s ideas came from the Prague School. The Prague linguists highlighted not only the grammar of a language, but the social implications and explanations of that language. Halliday was also influenced by Bronislaw Malinowski and J.R. Firth, professors of anthropology, who believed that all situations of language have a context that should be analyzed (Bloor & Bloor, 2004). Based on the two ideas of language context and language choice, Halliday came up with his own theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to the functional theorists, the primary function of language is to communicate meanings in particular contexts for specific purposes (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1985; Martin, 2001, 2009; Thompson, 2004). The choices made by the speaker/ writer when choosing to make meanings are connected to the cultural and social contexts (Thompson, 2004). Language, social, and cultural contexts are “interdependent” (p. 9). The social and cultural contexts are constructed by the way language is used.

Different cultures have decided over time on what patterns of language or “registers” are the most effective in achieving specific purposes (Martin, 2009). Hunston (2003) argues that the production of a written text is a social process as it plays a role in a particular social system. A speaker/ writer goes into a social process to construct meaning stage by stage and “not all at once” (p. 10). The SFL theorists can determine the purpose of a message by analyzing the language and the structural elements used in that context. For conducting such analysis, SFL

theorists analyze each language register used in each particular context. The following sections will shed more light on analyzing language register.

It is generally known that different contexts require different language choices or registers. Register is determined by field, tenor, and mode. Field is generally defined as what the speaker/writer is talking/ writing about, tenor is the relationship between the speaker/writer and the listener/reader, and mode is how the text is organized (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 46). Field, tenor, and mode are the three social functions of discourse (Martin & Rose, 2008). Every utterance the speaker/ writer makes uses grammatical and lexical resources to build field, tenor and mode (Coffin, 2003).

At a deeper, more functional level, these grammatical and lexical resources serve macro-functions known as the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. Coffin (2003, p. 15) defines the ideational resource as “internal and external reality”, the interpersonal resource as “interacting and building relationships”, and the textual resource as how we “organize information coherently”. (See Figure 2 for Functional Linguistic Grammar, Halliday (1964, 1985)).

with participants and process type in a text, the voice of participants emerges as active or passive.

“Passivization” is a means used by writers to express ideational meanings. It refers to the use of passive voice, which is probed by the question “what happened to Y?” rather than the active voice, which is probed by “what did X do to Y?”. For example, the sentence “The deed had already been done by X” has different ideational meaning from that of the sentence “X had already done the deed”. In the first sentence “the deed” is the goal while in the second sentence “X” or “the doer” is the actor.

Related to this is another field/ideational linguistic resource, namely “Nominalization” (e.g., Englander, 2006; Eggins, 2004). “Nominalization” in a text simply refers to the use of “Nouns” rather than “Verbs”. While the use of “Verbs” is a main feature of spoken English, the use of “Nouns” predominates in written English (Eggins, 2004). Nominalization plays a vital role in written texts as it has two textual advantages: Rhetorical organization and increased lexical density. Nominalization allows us to organize our texts in terms of ideas, reasons, and causes rather than organizing them in terms of ourselves.

The following examples illustrate Nominalization and its importance in establishing ideational meaning. Let us compare the following two sentences, adapted from Eggins (2004, p. 94): 1. “The reason for late submission of my essay was the illness of my children”. 2. “I handed my essay in late because my kids got sick”. In the first sentence, the writer uses “reason”, “submission”, and “illness” which are abstract actors that are typically used in organizing written texts. However, in the second sentence, the speaker uses “I”, and “my kids”, which are human actors that are typically used in organizing spoken texts. On the one hand, using the second

spoken-like sentence instead of the first written-like one in a formal written context, for instance, a student writes a formal e-mail to his or her professor, violates the norms of written language. This violation, especially when it is not justified, may add unwanted and unintended negative effects to the original message (Halliday, 1985). As a result, a message could be wrongly interpreted by a listener/ reader as an irony when a speaker/ writer does not mean it to be understood as an irony.

On the other hand, using the second less formal sentence in a formal written context lowers the level of formality among interactants. When such violation is not justified in a text, from the interpersonal perspective, some unnecessary negative effects will be added to that text (Eggins, 2004; Martin, 1985; Thompson, 2004). A listener/reader might feel insulted because of those unwanted effects. In addition to nominalization, lexical density, which will be explained in detail later in this paper, cannot be underestimated in texts.

In summary, field is a social function of discourse, conveying a set of ideational meanings that can be expressed through process type, participants, nominalization and passivization in a text (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1985; Martin & Rose, 2008).

3.1.2. Tenor

Turning now to Tenor, which has to do with “the people involved in the communication and the relationship between them” (Thompson, 2004, p. 40). It is affected by elements like the writer’s identity, the writer’s voice, and the audience. Tenor is realized through the writer’s grammatical choices. These choices can express interpersonal meaning through mood, modality, personal pronouns, and evaluative vocabulary (Thompson, 2004).

One means to express interpersonal meanings is the use of mood. Mood refers to how a speaker/writer can communicate interpersonal meanings to readers/ listeners (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). As “sentence structure” is used in traditional linguistics to refer to the building of a sentence, “mood” is used in functional grammar linguistics to refer to the function of a building or a structure in a sentence. Therefore, mood is not only the structure used in a sentence, it is the function to be achieved by using a specific structure as well. For example, a declarative structure is used to provide readers/ listeners with information. An imperative structure is used “to express feelings in an emphatic way” (p. 53). An interrogative structure is used to “ask for information, ask someone to do something, encourage someone to think about something, or make an offer” (p. 53). The speaker/writer decides to make choices based not only on the relationship between writer and audience, but also the stance a writer aims to achieve.

Another means that speakers/writers use to express interpersonal meanings is the use of modality. Modality can be used by a speaker/writer to take a stance by expressing attitudes and judgments. The use of modality becomes of great significance when a speaker/writer tries to persuade an audience to take a stance or to act upon some ideas. Modality has two halves: “modalization” and “modulation” (Egins, 2004). “Modalization” refers to modality when it is used by speaker/writer to express either probability or usability. Probability is “where a speaker/writer expresses judgments to the likelihood of something to happen” (p. 172). Usability is “where a speaker/writer expresses judgments to frequency with which something happens” (p. 172). Speakers/writers can take a stance through using different modalities on high (must, certainly, always), median (may, probably, usually), or low (might, possibly, sometimes) spectrum (p. 173). (See Appendix B for examples on how meanings are expressed through modalization).

“Modulation” is the grammar of offering goods and services, and it is the other half of modality. Modulation is “where modality is used to argue about the obligation or the inclination of proposals” (Eggins, 2004, p. 172). Degrees of obligation or necessity can be recognized through the use of high (must, required to), median (should, supposed to), and low (may, allowed to) spectrum. Inclination refers to “how willing am I to do something for you” (p. 180). Degrees of inclination can also be recognized through the use of high (I’m determined to lend you something), median (I am happy/ I am willing to lend you something), and low (I want/ I’d like to lend you something) spectrum.

A third interpersonal means is the use of personal pronouns like “I, we, you, us” and vocatives or addressing people with titles or names are used by a speaker/writer to create a personal relationship with the audience (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). However, to create a more distant objective relationship with an audience, writers do not typically use these personal pronouns in academic writing.

The final means of expressing interpersonal meanings to be discussed in this paper is the use of evaluative vocabularies. Martin and Rose (2003) argue that evaluative vocabularies belong to the attitude system, which can be divided into three types: affect, judgment, and appreciation. A speaker/writer can use these words to express feelings, make judgments, or assess the quality of objects (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). Evaluative words play a critical role in interpersonal relationship between communicators (Hyland, 2006) as they might be positive or negative.

Affect attitude deals with instances in the lexico-grammar that indicate emotional positive or negative effect on the intentional feelings of a speaker/writer rather than his or her

reactions. For example, in the statement “It moved me”, “moved” is a word that has positive effect on the speaker. Judgment attitude refers to the moral and personal character of people. Admiration and criticism belong to the personal character, while praise and condemnation belong to the moral character. In a statement like “It is wrong of her to ignore people”, the word “wrong” is an example of judgmental attitude of moral condemnation. Appreciation attitude is concerned with the positive or negative value of things. Appreciation attitude deals with a speaker’s/writer’s reactions towards an object, a phenomenon, or a person. In a statement like “Linda has a beautiful car”, the word “beautiful” is used by the speaker/writer to express positive appreciation toward the car. However, in a statement like “Bob and Marry have a torn relationship”, the word “torn” is used by the speaker/writer to express negative appreciation of the relationship between Bob and Mary (Martin & Rose, 2003, 2007).

Tenor, or the relationships between the interactants, is thus another social function of discourse (Martin & Rose, 2008). It is realized in a text through interpersonal meanings, which can be expressed through mood or the structure of a sentence, modality, personal pronouns, and evaluative vocabularies (Droga & Humphrey, 2003; Eggins, 2004; Martin & Rose, 2003; 2007).

3.1.3. Mode

As for Mode, this is the third and final register factor defined as “the role language is playing in the interaction” (Eggins, 2004, p. 90). Mode is crucial in writing as it is directly affected by the writer’s grammatical and lexical choices. The textual meta-function can be recognized by breaking clauses into two sections: Theme and Rheme. Typically, theme corresponds with the given information in a clause, and Rheme corresponds with the new information, but this is not always the case. Mode can express textual meanings through many

grammatical choices. Five of them will be used in this paper as follows: lexical density, grammatical intricacy, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis.

Lexical density, which refers to the percentage “of content carrying words in a text” (Eggins, 2004, p. 97) is a distinguishing feature for texts. Content carrying words include nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and main verbs. In written texts, lexical density is typically higher than 40% (Castello, 2008). However, in spoken texts, lexical density is typically below 40%. The lexical density of a text can be calculated by dividing the number of content carrying words in a text on the total number of lexical items in that text.

Grammatical intricacy, which refers “to the number of clauses in each statement” (Eggins, 2004, p. 97) is another differentiating feature of texts. Written texts have low grammatical intricacy, but spoken texts typically have high grammatical intricacy. Grammatical intricacy can be figured out by dividing the number of clauses in a text on the total number of statements/sentences in the same text.

Cohesion is known as the internal organization of a text, and it is defined as “the way the elements within a text bind it together as a unified whole” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976 as seen in Eggins, 2004, p. 24). For example, if somebody reads the pronoun “it” in a text and does not know what “it” refers to, the text is said to have lack of cohesion because the sentences in that text might not bind together to make a “unified whole”.

Textual adjuncts can add textual meanings to the organization of the message itself. They are of two types: Conjunctive adjuncts and Continuity Adjuncts. Conjunctive adjuncts have the function to link one sentence to another. They are words like *however*, *nevertheless*, and *in other words*. They usually occur at the beginning of a sentence, but they can change position.

Conjunctive adjuncts can be either cohesive adjuncts, which link sentences, or structural adjuncts, which link clauses to clause complexes (Eggins, 2004, p. 163). Structural or tactic adjuncts include: *because, if, when, although, and, but, before, as, and since*. Continuity adjuncts, on the other hand, are words like, *well, Oh, yeah*. They are used casually to introduce a clause and to signal that a response to prior talk is to be provided.

Emphasis can be expressed through Theme/Rheme strategies (Halliday, 1985; Eggins, 2004). For example, writers typically emphasis an issue by introducing it first to the readers. Some other writers may choose to emphasis an issue by delaying it. In addition, the use of passive or active voice is another strategy for emphasis. The use of cleft sentence is also an influential strategy. For example, “It was Jack who took care of the hens”.

3.2. SFL and this study

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has potential in helping to explain the scope of this study by highlighting the three main functions of language. According to SFL linguists, language, whether spoken or written, has three main functions: relating experience, creating personal relationships, and organizing information (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Gregory & Carroll, 1978; Halliday, 1973, 1978, 1985a, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1994, 2008, 2011; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Thompson, 2004). These three macro-functions can be tackled most adequately through a theory of language register such as the one originally proposed by Michael Halliday and his colleagues. The terms field (and related ideational resources), tenor (interpersonal meanings) and mode (home to ‘textuality’) are terms commonly in use as labels for the three meta-functions respectively.

According to Gregory and Carroll (1978), “Register can thus be identified by its relationship to situation. The more typical or stereotyped the situation, the more restricted will be the range of options from which choices in field, mode and tenor can be made” (p. 68). When language is spoken or written, it is about “something”. In this first function of language, “The field of discourse can be seen to be related mostly to the ideational function of language” (p. 27). The second function of language is that it does “something” socially. “It happens between and amongst people, and so it has an inter-personal function” (p. 27). That interpersonal function can be related to the tenor. Linguists also recognized that “language has ways of doing its own things” and that is what has been called “the textual function of language” (p. 27). That function can be related to the mode of language.

Although the role of language is critical when providing written feedback, not enough research on feedback has addressed language in particular. Agius and Wilkinson (2014, p. 556-557) argue that discussions of theoretical frameworks were completely missing in the majority of the 21 studies available on written feedback. Only four studies (Bailey & Garner, 2010; Koh, 2010; Orrell, 2006; Tuck, 2012) had discussions about theoretical frameworks, but they were not clear and most importantly they were not focused on the linguistic style of written feedback.

Moreover, when teachers provide their students with written feedback on their assignments to enhance their learning, teachers should know that the feedback provided is subject to be perceived by students differently from what teachers intended that feedback to mean for at least three reasons. Firstly, many factors, like quantity, quality, timing, may affect the perceived effectiveness of the feedback provided. Secondly, some researchers believe feedback has at least four levels: the task, the process, the self-regulating, the self as a person levels (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Each level has its own different function, for example,

feedback at the self-regulating level addresses the way students monitor, direct, and regulate actions toward the learning goal (p. 93). Thus, before providing their students with feedback, teachers are expected to decide both the level and the function of that feedback to be provided. Finally, many other factors related to learners may affect the perceived effectiveness of feedback provided, for example, learners' language competencies, cultures, and levels of knowledge.

In this study, I utilize the concepts of SFL by employing the theory of language register in analyzing written feedback through the theory's three aspects: 1) Field of discourse (and related ideational resources) represented by process type, participants, passivization, and nominalization. 2) Tenor of discourse (and related interpersonal resources) represented by the choice of mood (statements, commands, questions), modality, and including evaluative words, and personal pronouns. 3) Mode of discourse (and related textual resources) represented by cohesion, emphasis, textual adjuncts, grammatical intricacy, and lexical density.

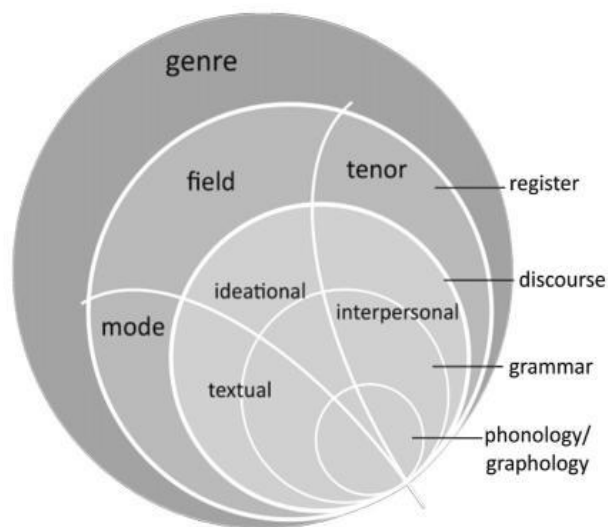
3.3. Conceptual Framework

Appendix C, adapted from Martin and Rose (2011) and Perumanathan (2014), shows two strongly linked circles in the middle: language circle and formative assessment and feedback circle. These two circles are together the core information, which is usually communicated among teachers and students to improve instruction and learning. My focus, in this study, is on the language circle, which shows that patterns of social organization in a culture (genre) are realized as patterns of social interaction in each context of situation (register), which in turn are realized as patterns of language (discourse) in each text (Martin & Rose, 2008). The language circle in Figure 3 mainly shows two levels: the level of context (genre) and the level of language (discourse). At the level of context, genre is represented by a combination of register variables: field, tenor and mode, each reflecting the functions of language within the social context. At the

level of language, the three meta-functions of language reflecting its social purpose are identified: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. These meanings are realized as patterns of discourse, grammar, and phonology.

Figure 3: Language in Social Contexts. Retrieved

from: https://www.google.ae/search?q=language+in+social+context&biw=1366&bih=614&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwiRvo3bouLOAhUBqx4KHSAoBV4Q_AUIBigB#tbm=isch&q=language-in-social-contexts&imgsrc=IDonB6IJH88P-M%3A



Despite the fact that most previously mentioned studies highlighted the importance of functional language in communication among interactants, no study made a connection between functional language and educative feedback in the domain of Education. This study employed the three aspects of language register: the ideational meanings of a text, which are associated with the field, the interpersonal meanings, which are associated with the tenor, and the textual meanings, which are associated with the mode of a text (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Martin, 2001; Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 1997). The goal was to explore how these meanings affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students by answering the following four research questions:

1. How frequently do professors use ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their written feedback to graduate students?
2. How do the ideational meanings of field affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?
3. How do the interpersonal meanings of tenor affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?
4. How do the textual meanings of mode affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

(See Appendix D for an example of Englander's work (2006). Englander also used the above mentioned three aspects of language in a different context).

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1. Overview of Research Design

This qualitative investigation involved sampling and analyzing students in a MA and/or PhD program in Education to explore how feedback effectiveness is influenced by teachers' written linguistic style used on students' assignments. Students were solicited from natural classrooms, as in Hyland (2003), from a Faculty of Education at a university in Eastern Ontario. The Faculty of Education was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, this study examined formative feedback that is an integral part of education. Worldwide, many studies in addition to most theses and dissertations on formative feedback have been done under the umbrella of the educational domain, and they generally belong to Faculties of Education. Secondly, the university under this study is in the reach of the researcher, which saved time and effort while collecting data and interviewing participants. There were no specific classes from which participants were chosen, as participation was voluntarily open to graduate students. This research consisted of two stages that were presented in this paper in the following order: The first stage consisted of collecting and analyzing feedback received on one of the students' corrected written assignments. The second stage involved interviewing these students about their perceptions of the effectiveness of that provided feedback.

4.2. Research Design Rationale. The intent to investigate the above research questions using a qualitative approach conceptually was drawn from a desire to deeply understand how linguistic style affects the effectiveness of written feedback. Moreover, it was an answer to a call for research by Hattie and Timperley (2007) who suggested that “[feedback] needs to be more *fully*

researched by qualitatively and quantitatively investigating how feedback works in the classroom.” (p. 104, emphasis added). In response to Hattie and Timperley’s arguments, a constructivist paradigm was applied to this research for it suits qualitative approaches wherein the researcher tried to deeply understand the phenomenon or problem under study to try to find a solution (Creswell, 2009, 2014).

The rationale for using case study method for this qualitative research was informed by Creswell’s (2013) suggestion for using case study when dealing with a bounded system. The system under this study was bounded in place, time and activity.

4.3. Participants and procedures.

4.3.1. Interviewing participants. Six graduate students were voluntarily interviewed after they signed their consent forms, of which each participant kept his or her own copy. This sample of a minimum of 6 students was identical in number to Hyland (2003). The rationale behind choosing students was that they are the receivers and the decoders of the feedback provided. One criterion was utilized in choosing the sample of students: all participants used English as their first, mother-tongue language in order to minimize the interference of another language or culture. Only one corrected written assignment for each selected student was collected for analysis in this study. One reason for this choice was because the linguistic style of an individual professor, used in one assignment, does not change from his or her style in a second nor a third assignment for the same student. By choosing one assignment, we also avoided redundancy of data collected and similar results. Finally, such a choice saved time and effort of data analysis. However, there were two criteria for choosing the assignments. First, each assignment was rich in feedback points. No assignment of less than 10 feedback points was collected. The reason for this criterion

was to allow a deep comprehensive analysis of the collected data. The second criterion was that each assignment was chosen from courses that have already been completed to minimize any influence on participants, professors, or currently taught courses.

Recruitment of participants was facilitated through the Graduate Student Association office of the university under research. An E-mail, with an attachment of a recruitment text inviting students to participate in this research, was sent to 455 graduate students. Only two participants were interested in participating. The same e-mail was sent two weeks later. Four more expressed their interest in participation (See Appendix E for recruitment text).

Interviewing of participating students took place after the students had read all the comments on their written assignments (as in Hyland, 2003). Each of the participating students was interviewed individually for about 30-45 minutes at a time and place of his or her convenience. With the consent of the participants, all interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and for improving the reliability of the study (Creswell, 2013). In each interview, the researcher brought a copy of the interviewee's assignment to discuss it. Open-ended semi structured and scale questions were used in the interviews (See Appendix F for a list of the student interview protocols). Moreover, field notes by the researcher were taken during the students' interviews for accuracy and for improving the reliability of the study (E.g., Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2010). Thus, interviews, field notes, and corrected works were the three data sources that were used in this study.

4.3.2. Collecting the student work. Nine assignments with different professors' feedback on them were collected three to five weeks before the time of interviewing to allow the researcher to have a comprehensive look at the collected data. Every participant submitted one assignment except one participant who submitted her proposal, which was one assignment by four different

professors and four different feedback points. This brought the complete number of assignments up to nine.

4.4. *Data analysis.* Collected data was analyzed in two stages: a. Written feedback on collected assignments data analysis, and b. Interview data analysis. These two data sources work hand in hand to answer the research questions. These data sources cannot be separated in this study. (See Table 1).

Table 1: *Research questions and data sources used to address them.*

Research Question	Data Source
1. How frequently do professors use ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their written feedback to graduate students?	Written feedback on assignments
2. How do the ideational meanings of field affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?	Interviews + Written feedback on assignments
3. How do the interpersonal meanings of tenor affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?	Interviews + Written feedback on assignments
4. How do the textual meanings of mode affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?	Interviews + Written feedback on assignments

The following sections will shed more light on these two stages.

4.4.1. Written work data analysis. Data analysis in this section started directly after the collection of the first assignments for each participating student. Professors' written feedback on students' assignments was gathered and analyzed individually as in Englander (2006). Each written feedback on every assignment was called a "feedback point" as in Hyland (2003). The assignment for every student was examined individually for the sake of comparing and contrasting perceived effectiveness of this current assignment with the participant's interview at a later stage. To aid with data analysis, a "theoretically justified" (Englander, 2006, p. 132) *systemic coder* (O'Donnell, 2002) was downloaded from the site www.wagsoft.com. The coding scheme was developed, once some data was obtained, for each of the three meta-functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.

The coding scheme worked as follows: all feedback points on each assignment were collected in one Word Rich Text document. Then, each document was changed into a plain text as the coder was not built to accept rich texts. After that, the stage of building a scheme was started. In this scheme, the three aspects of language, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, were built in. A dichotomous scale for each feature was built. Then, all feedback points were examined sentence by sentence. A complete number of 753 feedback points were analyzed for: ideational meanings, interpersonal meanings, and textual meanings. For example, one feedback point was "Give an example". Such a statement will be analyzed for all features at the same time. Firstly, ideational features: this statement is a material process. It has a hidden human participant "you". It is active voice. It does start with a noun. Secondly, this statement is imperative. It does not use modals. It uses the personal pronoun "You". No evaluative words were used in this feedback point. Finally, it has one verb and one noun. It has no cohesion as it does not say

example of what? It does not have any textual adjuncts. It does not have grammatical intricacy as it stands alone as an independent clause. Lastly, it does not have any emphasis.

This process of analysis was repeated with each feedback point. Many hours of work were invested in this analysis. When the analyses was over, frequency counts demonstrated how many times field and its features, tenor and its features, and mode and its features have been used in each submitted assignment. Unfortunately, the code did not provide comparison for more than two assignments at a time. All frequencies of each assignment were moved to an Excel document for further analysis. These counts were changed into percentages for easier calculation to be compared and contrasted with each other and with the interviews at a later stage.

Then, at the Excel document, each Means for each feature in each assignment was calculated. Then, the sample Mean was figured. Then, the Standard Deviation for each feature and for each assignment Mean and sample Mean to be compared and contrasted with each other. Lexical density and grammatical intricacy for each assignment were calculated and compared. The same method was done with each assignment for each student. At the end of the individual analysis of each assignment, I had a table of frequency counts and percentages for each participating student. This method provided the researcher with the option of comparing and contrasting all cases together in an intra-case study (Creswell, 2013). Although analyzing each assignment for each participant took a lot of time and effort and more importantly, the results might have contradicted each other, this method made it easier for the researcher to partly avoid contradictory results by allowing the researcher to interpret each participating student as an individual case by him or herself. Finally, frequency counts for all collected data were obtained and compared to the emerging themes from interviews.

4.4.2. Interview data analysis. All the interviews were audio-recorded and once they were conducted, they were transcribed first using a software “Dragon”, then as the transcription was not correct, all collected data with the field notes was transcribed manually. The coding followed the three phases, first cycle coding, memo writing, and second-cycle coding, suggested by Saldana (2013) for coding qualitative data.

4.4.2.a. First-cycle coding. After verbatim transcribing of the interview data, these transcripts were read many times by the researcher. This was memory refresher of what was covered in the interviews. It helped the researcher reflecting on the collected data. In this first-cycle coding process, as described by Saldana (2013), descriptive and in-vivo coding techniques were used. Saldana (2013) argues that using descriptive and in-vivo codes are appropriate for all forms of qualitative analysis, but can be particularly useful for the novice qualitative researcher. Descriptive codes summarize in a word or short phrase the basic topic of a passage. In-vivo codes are short phrases from the actual language found in the passage (Saldana, 2013). These descriptive and in-vivo codes were used as this process honors both the researcher’s perception and the voice(s) of participant(s). Saldana (2013, p. 94) notes that “sometimes a participant says it best; sometimes a researcher does”. Descriptive and in-vivo codes deconstructed the collected data into discrete parts that were examined to look for similarities, differences, and to begin considering preliminary categories and themes. we read and read until all the collected data was coded.

4.4.2.b. Memo-writing. The reflexive process of memo-writing throughout the data analysis process started. Memo-writing was used as a tool to reflect on the first-cycle coding process and to begin thinking about the second-cycle coding process. According to Saldana (2013), memo-writing is used for researchers to document and reflect on code choices, emerging patterns, the

process of inquiry, as well as to pose any questions that the researcher may have during the process of analysis. Memo-writing helped the researcher to realize his own assumptions and control them. It also helped the researcher to question his coding practices of the actual data that was transcribed, and to consider the emerging sub-themes and themes. Finally, it encouraged the researcher to have a conversation with himself about the data. This practice of memo writing allowed the smooth transitioning of the researcher from the first-cycle coding process to the second-cycle coding process.

4.4.2.c. Second-cycle coding. This second-cycle coding was important as it allowed the researcher to analyze and re-analyze the coded data in the first-cycle coding. It involved reorganizing the data into smaller sub-themes, which will be developed into themes. This process started by reorganizing the coded data into sub-themes. Then, the researcher started looking within and between these sub-themes to discover any emerging themes. This action involved re-coding the data under the specific sub-themes and then comparing and contrasting the codes within the sub-themes to search for themes. The emerging themes transcended the emerging sub-themes and served to address the research questions in hand.

4.5. Researcher's assumptions and presuppositions

Being both undergraduate and graduate student, a teacher for 17 years, a supervisor for two years, a Teaching-Learning-Advisor for two years, working with about two thousand teachers in the UAE, I have developed the need for functionally addressing the people I communicate with especially in workshops and class visits. I have found SFL so helpful in using language functionally and appropriately either with students or teachers. That is how this idea of using SFL in this study came to my mind.

The interference or bias of a researcher is an inevitable factor while conducting a qualitative study, but I tried to minimize it by telling the participants in my study about my assumptions and presuppositions. Then, I requested them not to be affected with these assumptions, and to put them aside. After that, I asked them to talk about their assumptions and presuppositions by using scale, choice, and open-ended questions (See Appendix F).

In order to minimize my interference in interpreting the collected data, and to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative data, data triangulation, which refers to the consistency across the various data (e.g., Creswell, 2013) was conducted only with one participant who requested to have a look at the results before they were published. The researcher did not have to adjust any findings as they were in agreement with that participant. To protect the results document before sending them to that participant, a password was sent to the participant in a separate e-mail to open the word document, which was sent to them in another e-mail via their university secured e-mail. The validity of the quantitative was assured as all the calculation was done automatically in the systemic coder.

Chapter Five

Results

Introduction

In this qualitative study, results will be presented in two stages: 1. Results obtained from the systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002). A total number of nine written assignments, with different professors' written feedback points on them, were gathered from graduate students at a Faculty of Education. Each individual feedback point was analyzed in the coder. 2. Results achieved from interviewing participants. The same six graduate students, who submitted their assignments for the first stage, were interviewed to talk about the written feedback provided on their assignments and to answer other related questions.

In this section, results from both the first and the second stages will be presented as follows: 1. Results from the coder for the whole sample. 2. Results from the coder for each assignment. 3. Results for emerging themes from interviews. This order is important for at least three reasons: 1. It is easier for the reader to follow the general results before getting into the specific details. 2. More importantly, this first presentation of the general results works as a benchmark with which all other assignments will be compared and contrasted for effectiveness. 3. According to the "register" theory, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings all work together so it is illogical to have one and leave the others. The second presentation of each assignment is important for two reasons: 1. It provides the reader with some specific numbers about every ideational, interpersonal, and textual feature in each assignment for later comparison with numbers from the whole sample. 2. It justifies each participant rating when he or she was asked to rate the importance of the linguistic style of the professor on his or her assignment. The

third presentation of emerging themes is essential for it not only provides the reader with results from interviews, but also supports results from the coder.

5.1. Ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings for the whole sample

The choice of assignment was completely left for each student. Participants were numbered in a chronological order according to their submissions of their assignments. For example, the student who submitted the first assignment was given number one and so on. Each student submitted one assignment except for Mary, who chose to submit her thesis proposal. It was one assignment with four different professors' written feedback on it.

Based on my research questions, a scheme was built in (O'Donnell's, 2002) systemic coder. All feedback points, provided on each student assignment(s), were gathered in a rich text. Then all texts were changed into plain texts for the coder to accept. A total number of 753 feedback points were coded, on a dichotomous scale, one by one to decide whether each point has the following ideational meaning: processes (material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relational, or existential), participants (human or non-human), active or passive voice, and/or nominalization. Each feedback point was also checked for the following interpersonal meanings: statements (declarative, interrogative, or imperative), modality, personal pronoun, and/or evaluative words. Each point, as well, was checked for the following textual meanings: lexical density, grammatical intricacy, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and/or emphasis. Checking the feedback points for the above mentioned meanings was done at the same time.

5.1.1. Ideational Meanings. In this study, ideational meanings include processes, participants, active and passive statements, and nominalization. In processes, the Mean for relational process was the highest in all other processes. It reached 32%. The Mean for behavioral process was

17%. Unlike all other processes, the high value of the material process, the more effective the sent message is likely to be perceived. The Mean of material process for the entire study was 17%.

The higher the use of human participants and active voice, the less effective our messages are likely to be perceived because of the added negative effects. In our sample, the Mean for human participants was relatively high. It reached 47%. In addition, the use of active voice dominated the whole sample. Its Mean was 71%. However, the higher the use of passive voice and nominalization, the more effective the sent message is likely to be perceived. The Mean of use of the passive voice was only 11% while for Nominalization, it was only 15%. (See Table 2). These numbers show that the ideational meanings for the entire sample was low. (See Appendix G for Ideational meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the ideational meanings for the entire sample.

		Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Number of Feedback points (N)	753		
IDEATIONAL MEANING	material process	129	0.17	0.07
	mental process	105	0.14	0.053
	behavioural process	130	0.17	0.085
	verbal process	49	0.07	0.035
	relational process	240	0.32	0.135
	existential process	100	0.13	0.107
	human participants	357	0.47	0.11
	non human participants	396	0.53	0.11
	active voice	534	0.71	0.186
	passive voice	80	0.11	0.036
	phrases	139	0.18	0.188
	nominalization	111	0.15	0.105
	no nominalization	642	0.85	0.105

5.1.2. *Interpersonal Meanings*. Interpersonal meanings include types of statements, modality, personal pronoun and evaluative words. The high use of declarative and interrogative statements, and the high use of modality, the more effective our message is likely to be perceived. The Mean for the use of declarative statements was 51%, which is relatively high. The Mean for the use of interrogative statements was 27%, which is relatively low. Modality was used poorly. Its Mean

was only 22%. In our nine assignments, modality ranged from 0% as in the case of Mary’s third assignment and 24% in the case of Mark’s assignment. (See Table 3)

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the interpersonal meanings for the entire sample.

		Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Number of Feedback points (N)	753		
INTERPERSONAL MEANING	declarative statements	383	0.51	0.219
	interrogative statements	207	0.27	0.153
	imperative statements	44	0.06	0.044
	phrases	119	0.16	0.162
	modality	164	0.22	0.105
	no modality	589	0.78	0.105
	yes personal pronoun	315	0.42	0.125
	no personal pronoun	438	0.58	0.125
	evaluative words	143	0.19	0.194
	no evaluative words	610	0.81	0.194

However, the low use of imperative statements, personal pronouns and evaluative words in texts can lead to a more effective communication among participants. In this sample, the Mean for the use of imperative statements was 6%. Its Mean was 42%. Personal pronoun Mean ranged from

17% as in Jane’s assignment, and 56% as in Robert’s assignment. The use of evaluative words was relatively low. Its Mean was 19%. , but it ranged from 0% as Mary’s third assignment and 68% as in Sarah’s assignment. (See Appendix H for interpersonal meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

5.1.3. *Textual Meanings.* Textual meanings, in our study, include lexical density, grammatical intricacy, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. (See Table 4).

Table 4: *Means, Standard Deviation, and number of occurrences (N) of the textual meanings for the entire sample.*

		Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Number of Feedback points (N)	753		
TEXTUAL MEANING	yes lexical density Nouns	583	0.77	0.151
	no lexical density Nouns	170	0.23	0.151
	yes lexical density verbs	539	0.72	0.196
	no lexical density verbs	214	0.28	0.196
	yes lexical density adjectives 1	436	0.58	0.217
	no lexical density adjectives 1	317	0.42	0.217
	yes lexical density adjectives 2	238	0.32	0.178
	no lexical density adjectives 2	515	0.68	0.178
	yes lexical density adverbs	206	0.27	0.132
	no lexical density adverbs	547	0.73	0.132
	yes grammatical intricacy	383	0.51	0.23
	no grammatical intricacy	370	0.49	0.23
	yes- cohesion	407	0.54	0.157
	no-cohesion	346	0.46	0.157
	yes textual adjuncts	140	0.19	0.044
	no textual adjuncts	613	0.81	0.044
yes emphasis	151	0.20	0.091	
no emphasis	602	0.80	0.091	

The higher use of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis, the more effective our message is likely to be perceived. The Mean for lexical density was about 38.5%. For individual assignments, lexical density ranged between 19% as in Jane's assignment, and 45% as in Mary's fourth assignment. The Mean for cohesion was only 54%. For individual assignments, the Mean ranged from 20% as in Mary's third assignment, and 75% as in Robert's assignment. Textual adjuncts were poorly used. The Mean was only 19%. The Means for each assignment ranged from 11% as in Sarah's assignment to 24% as in Ally's assignment. The Mean for the use of emphasis was 20%. Emphasis Means for individual assignments ranged from 0% as in Mary's third assignment and 29% as in Mark's assignment. (See Appendix I for textual meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

However, the high use of grammatical intricacy, the less effective our message is likely to be perceived. In this sample, the use of grammatical intricacy was high. (See Table 5). Its Mean was 60%. For the individual assignments, the Mean ranged from 13% as in Jane's assignment and 79% in the case of Ally's assignment. (Check Appendix J for Lexical Density and Grammatical Intricacy Means for each Assignment).

Table 5: *Lexical density and Grammatical intricacy for the whole sample.*

Participants		Jane's Assignment	Mary's 1st. Assignment	Mary's 2nd. Assignment	Mary's 3rd. Assignment	Mary's 4th. Assignment	Mark's Assignment	Ally's Assignment	Sarah's Assignment	Robert's Assignment	Total (N)
	Number of words in each assignment (N)	366	182	1344	72	535	1067	1228	147	253	5194
TEXTUAL MEANING	Lexical Density Means	19%	27%	43%	42%	45%	44%	36%	35%	26%	39%
	Grammatical intricacy	5	13	108	6	12	89	137	2	11	383

Summary

Results of the systemic coder about the whole sample showed that the ideational meanings of the sample were as follows: The Means for the use of material process, passive voice, and nominalization were 0.17, 0.11, 0.15 respectively. These numbers are advised to be increased. But, the Means for the ideational meanings of relational process, active voice, human participants were 0.32, 0.47, and 0.47 respectively. It is suggested these numbers are to be decreased. For interpersonal meanings, the Means for the use of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality were 0.51, 0.27, and 0.22. It is suggested that these numbers are to be increased. However, the interpersonal meanings for the use of imperative statements, personal pronoun, and evaluative words were 0.06, 0.42, and 0.19 respectively. These numbers are advised to be decreased. For textual meanings, the Means for the use of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis were 0.39, 0.54, 0.19, and 0.20 respectively. These numbers are suggested to be increased. The Mean for grammatical intricacy

was 0.60, which is advised to be decreased. The following section will show the Means for the use of the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings for each participant.

5.2. Ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings for each graduate assignment

According to five participants, the received feedback on their assignments was perceived as effective, two other participants reported that feedback provided was perceived as not so effective, and still two others said the feedback to them was ineffective. By calculating the Mean for each feature in all assignments, one will figure out a perceived level of feedback effectiveness by all students in connection to each ideational, interpersonal, and textual features. For example, in the domain of ideational meanings, participants suggested that the use of material process can make feedback perceived as more effective. If the use of material process in an assignment is more than its use in the whole sample, the feedback on that assignment, in connection to this feature, can be expected to more likely be perceived as more effective than the feedback on the whole sample in connection to the same feature and vice versa. The same talk applies to other ideational features: non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization.

That is one reason why the Mean for these four features in each assignment (MA) will be calculated and compared to the Mean of the same features for the whole sample (MS) and standard deviation for MA and MS will also be calculated. However, the more the use of relational process, behavioral process or active voice in an assignment, the less effective the feedback in that assignment is expected to be in connection to these features and vice versa. Again, MA for these three features will be calculated and compared to MS for the same features. Standard Deviation (SD) and the difference (D) between MA and MS will be calculated. If the difference D for ideational meanings 1 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be

perceived as effective. However, if the difference D for ideational meanings 2 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be perceived as ineffective. The same talk will be applied to each assignment. (See Appendix K for Acronym Legend).

Besides, if D for interpersonal meanings 1 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be perceived as effective. However, if the difference D for interpersonal meanings 2 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be perceived as ineffective. The same talk will be applied to each assignment.

In the same vein, if D for textual meanings 1 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be perceived as effective. However, if the difference D for textual meanings 2 is positive, the feedback provided is more likely to be perceived as ineffective. The same talk will be applied to each assignment.

5.2.1. Jane, By analyzing the feedback points on Jane's assignment in the systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002), I came out with the following results. In terms of ideational meaning, MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 29% while MS was 21%. SD was 0.06. (See Appendix I for acronym legend). This indicated that because these features in Jane's assignment were higher than them in the whole sample, the perceived level of feedback effectiveness provided on the assignment (LoA) was higher than the perceived level of feedback effectiveness for the whole sample (LoS). In addition, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 35%. MS for the same features was 66%. SD was 0.22. As the MA was lower than MS for these features, LoA was higher than LoS.

The interpersonal meaning for Jane’s assignment was as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 22%. MS was 33%. SD was 0.08. This illustrated that LoA in connection of the above features was less than LoS. However, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 16% while MS for the same features was 22%. SD was 0.04. This proved that LoA was higher than LoS.

Textual meanings for Jane’s assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 23%. MS was 33%. SD was 0.07. This showed that LoA was lower than LoS in connection to these four features. But MA for grammatical intricacy was 13% while MS was 60%. SD was 0.34. This demonstrated that LoA was higher than LoS in connection to grammatical intricacy. (See Table 6).

Table 6: *Mean of Jane’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Jane's Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	29%	21%	0.06	8%
Id. M 2	35%	66%	0.22	-31%
Int. M. 1	22%	33%	0.08	-11%
Int. M. 2	16%	22%	0.04	-6%
Text. M. 1	23%	33%	0.07	-9%
Text. M. 2	13%	60%	0.34	-48%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

5.2.2.a. *Mary's first assignment.* . The ideational meanings for Mary's first assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 35% when MS was 21%. SD was 0.08. This indicated that LoA was higher than LoS. Moreover, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 33% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.05. As MA was lower than MS, this proved that LoA was again higher than LoS.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 23% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.07. This indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. However, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 21% and MS was 22%. SD was 0.01. This low result of MA showed that LoA was higher than LoS for these interpersonal features. (See Table 7).

Table 7: *Mean of Mary's 1st. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Mary's 1st. Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	35%	21%	0.09	13%
Id. M 2	33%	40%	0.05	-7%
Int. M. 1	23%	33%	0.07	-10%
Int. M. 2	21%	22%	0.01	-1%
Text. M. 1	34%	33%	0.01	2%
Text. M. 2	29%	60%	0.23	-32%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Textual meanings for Mary's first assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 34% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.01. This high result of MA illustrated that LoA was also higher than LoS. Moreover, MA for grammatical intricacy was 29% while MS was 60%. SD was 0.23. This low result of MA demonstrated that LoA was higher than LoS.

5.2.2.b. Mary's second assignment. Results of the ideational meaning of Mary's feedback on her second assignment were as follows: MA the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 21% and that was similar to MS. SD was zero. This showed that LoA was the same level as LoS. On the same vein, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 39% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.01. This low result of MA indicated that LoA was higher than LoS for these ideational features.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 36% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This high result of MA proved that LoA was higher than LoS for these features. However, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 23% and MS was 22%. SD was zero. This result of SD illustrated that LoA was more or less the same level as LoS.

Textual meanings for Mary's second assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 36% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This high MA showed that LoA was higher than LoS. But MA for grammatical intricacy was 63% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.02. This high MA indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for this textual feature of grammatical intricacy. (See Table 8).

Table 8: *Mean of Mary’s 2nd. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Mary's 2nd. Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	21%	21%	0.00	0%
Id. M 2	39%	40%	0.01	-1%
Int. M. 1	36%	33%	0.02	3%
Int. M. 2	23%	22%	0.00	1%
Text. M. 1	36%	33%	0.02	3%
Text. M. 2	63%	60%	0.02	3%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

5.2.2.c. *Mary’s third assignment.* Results of the ideational meaning of Mary’s feedback on her third assignment by her second committee member were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 24% and MS was 21%. SD was 0,02. This demonstrated that LoA was higher than LoS for these features. But MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 44% and MS was 40%. SD was 0.03. This high result of MA showed that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. (See Table 9).

Table 9: Mean of Mary’s 3rd. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.

	Mary's 3rd. Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	24%	21%	0.02	2%
Id. M 2	44%	40%	0.03	4%
Int. M. 1	30%	33%	0.03	-4%
Int. M. 2	25%	22%	0.02	3%
Text. M. 1	30%	33%	0.02	-3%
Text. M. 2	41%	60%	0.14	-20%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 30% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.03. This indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. Moreover, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 25% and MS was 22%. SD was 0.02. This proved that LoA was also lower than LoS for these features.

Textual meanings for Mary’s third assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 30% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This showed that LoA was lower than LoS. But MA for grammatical intricacy was 41%

and MS was 60%. SD was 0.14. This result of MA indicated that LoA was higher than LoS for this textual feature.

5.2.2.d. *Mary's fourth assignment.* Results of the ideational meaning for Mary's feedback on her fourth assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 27% and MS was 21%. SD was 0.04. This illustrated that LoA was higher than LoS in connection to these ideational features. In the same vein, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 31% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.06. This proved that LoA was also higher than LoS. (See Table 10).

Table 10: *Mean of Mary's 4th. assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Mary's 4th. Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	27%	21%	0.04	6%
Id. M 2	31%	40%	0.06	-9%
Int. M. 1	16%	33%	0.13	-18%
Int. M. 2	13%	22%	0.06	-9%
Text. M. 1	19%	33%	0.10	-14%
Text. M. 2	75%	60%	0.10	15%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 16% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.13. This indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. However, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 13% and MS was 22%. SD was 0,06. This showed that LoA was higher than LoS for the later mentioned features.

Textual meanings for Mary's fourth assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 19% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.10. This showed that LoA was lower than LoS. Moreover, MA for grammatical intricacy was 75% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.10. This high result of MA demonstrated that LoA was also lower than LoS for this textual feature.

5.2.3. Mark. In terms of ideational meaning, the results for Mark's assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 22% and MS was 21%. SD was zero. Although MA was a little bit higher than MS, SD did not show any difference. This result indicated that LoA was more or less the same level as LoS in connection to these ideational features. But MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 41% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.01. In this case, SD showed some difference between MA and MS. This indicated that LoA was lower than LoS.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 36% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This illustrated that LoA was higher than LoS for these features. Although MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 23% and MS was

22%, SD was zero. This demonstrated that LoA was very similar to the level of LoS for these lately mentioned features. (See Table 11).

Table 11: *Mean of Mark's assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Mark's Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	22%	21%	0.00	1%
Id. M 2	41%	40%	0.01	1%
Int. M. 1	36%	33%	0.02	3%
Int. M. 2	23%	22%	0.00	1%
Text. M. 1	37%	33%	0.03	4%
Text. M. 2	72%	60%	0.08	11%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1, ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Textual meanings for Mark's assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 37% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.03. This showed that LoA was lower than LoS. However, MA for grammatical intricacy was 72% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.08. This high MA proved that LoA was lower than LoS for grammatical intricacy.

5.2.4. *Ally*. Results from the coder showed that the ideational meaning of the feedback points provided to Ally on her assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 23% and MS was 21%. SD was 0.01. This demonstrated that MA was a bit higher than MS, which indicated that LoA was higher than LoS in connection to these features. But MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 44% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.03. This high MA proved that LoA was lower than LoS for these lately mentioned features. (See Table 12).

Table 12: *Mean of Ally’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Ally's Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	23%	21%	0.01	1%
Id. M 2	44%	40%	0.03	4%
Int. M. 1	38%	33%	0.03	4%
Int. M. 2	20%	22%	0.01	-2%
Text. M. 1	31%	33%	0.02	-2%
Text. M. 2	79%	60%	0.13	19%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 38% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.03. This illustrated that LoA was higher than LoS for these interpersonal features. In addition, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 20% and MS was 22%, SD was 0.01. This low MA showed that LoA was higher than LoS in connection to the lately mentioned features.

Textual meanings for Ally's assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 31% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This low MA showed that LoA was lower than LoS. Moreover, MA for grammatical intricacy was 79% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.13. This high MA illustrated that LoA was lower than LoS for this textual feature.

5.2.5. *Sarah*. In terms of ideational meanings, the results for Sarah's assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 28% and MS was 21%. SD was 0,05. This high MA proved that LoA was higher than LoS for these ideational features. In addition, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 33% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.05. This low MA demonstrated that LoA, for these features, was higher than LoS.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 21% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.09. This indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. Besides, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 42% and MS was 22%, SD was 0.14.

This showed that LoA was also lower than LoS for these lately mentioned interpersonal features. (See Table 13).

Table 13: *Mean of Sarah’s assignment, Mean of the entire sample, Standard Deviation, and Means difference.*

	Sarah's Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	28%	21%	0.05	7%
Id. M 2	33%	40%	0.05	-7%
Int. M. 1	21%	33%	0.09	-12%
Int. M. 2	42%	22%	0.14	20%
Text. M. 1	23%	33%	0.07	-10%
Text. M. 2	15%	60%	0.32	-45%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Textual meanings for Sarah’s assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 23% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.07. This illustrated that LoA was lower than LoS. However, MA for grammatical intricacy was 15% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.32. This low MA showed that LoA was higher than LoS in terms of grammatical intricacy.

5.2.6. *Robert*, For ideational meaning, the results for Robert’s assignment were as follows: MA for the use of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization was 20% and MS was 21%. SD was 0.01. This result of lower MA indicated that LoA was lower than LoS for these features. In addition, MA for the use of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice was 46% while MS was 40%. SD was 0.04. This high MA for these features showed that LoA was lower than LoS. (See Table 14).

Table 14: *Mean of Robert’s assignment (MA), Mean of the entire sample (MS), Standard Deviation (SD), and Means difference (D).*

	Robert's Assignment			
	MA	MS	SD	D
Id. M. 1	20%	21%	0.01	-2%
Id. M 2	46%	40%	0.04	6%
Int. M. 1	39%	33%	0.04	5%
Int. M. 2	28%	22%	0.04	6%
Text. M. 1	36%	33%	0.02	3%
Text. M. 2	34%	60%	0.18	-26%

Note: ID. M.1 = Ideational Meanings 1 , ID. M.2 = Ideational Meanings 2, Int. M.1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1, Int. M.2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2, Text. M.1 = Textual Meanings 1, Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2, MS = Mean for the entire sample, MA = Assignment Mean, SD = Standard Deviation for the Mean of specific language features in the entire sample and the Mean of the same features in each assignment, D = Difference between MA and MS. High values of ID. M.1, Int.M.1, and Text. M. 1 are desirable for MA. Low values of ID. M.2, Int.M.2, and Text. M.2 are also desirable for MA.

Interpersonal meanings were as follows: MA for the use of the features of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality was 39% while MS was 33%. SD was 0.04.

This indicated that LoA was higher for these features than LoS. However, MA for the use of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words was 28% and MS was 22%, SD was zero. This demonstrated that LoA, for these features, was lower than LoS.

Textual meanings for Robert's assignment were as follows: MA for the features of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis was 36% and MS was 33%. SD was 0.02. This showed that LoA was higher than LoS. Besides, MA for grammatical intricacy was 34% and MS was 60%. SD was 0.18. This low MA proved that LoA for grammatical intricacy was higher than LoS.

Summary

The feedback provided on five assignments was perceived by the participants as effective feedback. The feedback on two assignments was perceived as less effective. The Feedback on the other two remaining assignments was perceived as ineffective. Results from the systemic coder explained these results as follows: for example, Jane perceived the feedback on her assignment as effective. The Means for ideational meanings 2, interpersonal meanings 2, and textual meanings 2 for Jane's assignment were 35, 16, and 13 respectively. The Means for the whole sample were 66, 22, 60. This proved that the numbers for Jane's assignment were less than the numbers for the whole sample.

For another example, Robert perceived the feedback on his assignment as less effective. The coder demonstrated that the interpersonal meanings 1 and the textual meanings 1 for Robert's assignment were 39 and 36 respectively. The sample numbers were 33 and 33 respectively. However, the ideational meanings 2 and the interpersonal meanings 2 for Robert's were 46 and 28, and the sample ideational meanings 2 and interpersonal meanings 2 were 40 and

22 respectively. Robert's numbers were always higher than the sample. In order to help the feedback perceived as effective, it is suggested that ideational meanings 1, interpersonal meanings 1, and textual meanings 1 for the assignment are to be higher than these meanings for the sample. In addition, it is suggested that ideational meanings 2, interpersonal meanings 2, and textual meanings 2 for the assignment are to be lower than these meanings for the sample.

For the final example, Ally perceived the feedback on her assignment as ineffective. The coder illustrated that the Means for Ally's assignment were as follows: The use of ideational meanings 2, and textual meanings 2 were 44 and 79 respectively. The sample ideational meanings 2 and textual meanings 2 were 40 and 60 respectively. In addition, Ally's assignment textual meanings 1 was 31, and the sample textual meanings 1 was 33. All these results assisted in perceiving the feedback provided to Ally as ineffective. The following section will discuss the emerging themes from interviewing participants.

5.3. Emerging themes from the data on effective feedback

All interviews were audio-recorded. The recorded material was transcribed and coded. The coding adopted three phases, first cycle coding, memo writing, and second-cycle coding, suggested by Saldana (2013) for coding qualitative data. Once the analysis was over, five main themes emerged. (See Appendix L for emerging themes). These themes were echoed by the voices of the six interviewees. The following sections will shed more light on these themes and their sub-themes.

5.3.1. Linguistic style is part of feedback

Most participants have agreed that linguistic style of a teacher affect the feedback provided by that teacher. On a scale of one to ten, where one is not important and ten is very

important, students were asked to rate twice. Firstly, they generally rated the importance of a professor linguistic style and how it affects the effectiveness of written feedback provided to students. Secondly, each participant rated the importance of his or her professor linguistic style and how it affects the effectiveness of written feedback provided to them on their assignments. The first ratings will be presented in this theme, but the second ratings will be discussed at a later stage. In this theme, three sub-themes will be discussed: *students' preferred way of providing feedback, linguistic style and feedback*, and *professor linguistic style*.

5.3.1.a. Students' preferred way of providing feedback. Participants were asked some questions about their preferred way of providing feedback for at least two reasons: 1. Most of the participants were teachers. 2. Some of them, for example, Mary reported that she provide feedback in the same way she receive it. Here are three examples that showed participants' agreement with the argument that linguistic style of a teacher may affect the feedback they provide. The first example, Jane was asked the following question: "When proving feedback to your students, would you like to say; A. This word is wrong? Or B. Is this the best word?". Jane answered "I would say, B. Is this the best word? rather than A. This word is wrong because it is neutral". By choosing the language style in B over that style of A, Jane preferred not to be directive as being directive adds unwanted hidden negative effects that make her sound judgmental. Therefore, she could build obstacles in front of a student, who seeks learning.

For the second example, Mark was asked the same question and he said, said "I would say, B. Is this the best word? rather than A. This word is wrong because I want them to re-think and if they feel so certain about it, then that is the right of the author". Mark deliberately chose the language style in option B in order to be motivating by adding hidden positive effects. He could urge his students to think more by choosing option B. However, if Mark chooses the

language style in option A, he may not be able to easily achieve his goal.

For the last example, Ally was asked the same question and answered, “ I would say, B. Is this the best word? rather than A. This word is wrong because A is too harsh”. Ally recognized the harshness in the language style in option A and that is why she avoided using it. Ally recognized that she was addressing a human being and she preferred to be polite as the hidden negative effects in option B could make her perceived as impolite.

5.3.1.b. Linguistic style and feedback. Linguistic style is an integral part of feedback. Most participants have agreed on this idea. For example, Jane said “While I think linguistic style is very important, I see it is hard to achieve especially when a professor has many students or many classes”. Some students dug deeper and highlighted the relationship between sentence structure and meaning. For instance, Mark added, “I am a language teacher and I'm constantly torn between how I address people in my feedback because if I phrase it this way, it is supportive, and if I phrase it that way, it is not supportive”. However, some students may find no or weak relationship between linguistic style and feedback. For instance, Mary replied, “I do not think my professors' linguistic styles affected the effectiveness of the written feedback provided because I am more concerned with the content itself”. Mary might think linguistic style is separated from feedback content.

5.3.1.c. Professor linguistic style. Professor linguistic style plays a vital role when providing written feedback. Most of the ratings confirmed that many students find a professor's linguistic style important particularly in feedback process. (See Table 15 for the participants' first ratings). Some students warned from unwanted consequences that could be created by an uneasy linguistic style of a professor. For example, when participants were asked to rate the importance

of a professor's linguistic style in making written feedback perceived as effective, Robert said,

I would rate the importance of a professor's linguistic style in making written feedback perceived as effective as Nine, which is extremely important because if the style reflects very poor choices of words, if it is aggressive, if it is abrasive, if it is insulting, if it is condescending, if it is demeaning, if it is rude, unsupportive, you are going to turn the student off completely. Off the professor, off the course, and even off the program.

Table 15: *Participants' first ratings on the importance of a professor linguistic style on making written feedback provided to students effective. One is not important and ten is very important.*

	Participant's Name	Ratings from one to ten
1.	Jane	7.5
2.	Mary	3
3.	Mark	7.5
4.	Ally	7
5.	Sarah	7
6.	Robert	9

Some students emphasized that a professor harsh linguistic style misleads students to wrongly interpret the message provided on their assignments. Unfortunately, such feedback will most likely be seen as negative or ineffective. Thus, students are more likely to lose interest in it, as well as, they may avoid acting on it. For example, Jane said,

I would describe the role of a professor's linguistic style in making written feedback to students effective as seven or eight out of ten because if the style creates

misunderstanding for a student, the student will not be able to act on it.

However, some students make a separation between feedback content and the linguistic style of its provider. For instance, Mary said, “What affected me most in terms of the learning experience was the content and not the way they phrased the comments”. Mary was the only participant who rejected the idea of integration between feedback and the linguistic style of its provider.

5.3.2. Students require Effective Feedback

In this theme, five sub-themes have emerged: *feedback justification*, *feedback appreciation*, *action on feedback*, *feedback effect on students*, and *feedback effectiveness*.

5.3.2.a. *Feedback justification*. Many students find justifications for their professors when these professors provide their students with written feedback. For example, Jane said,

My professor’s comments were justified because he was identifying places in the text where I have been unclear or sloppy in my thinking, or used jargon. When I read his questions, it was obvious to me why he was questioning it. Maybe, my professor had seen my paper this way because I was not clear in my language, but I think the comments were fair.

Some students stressed the idea that a professor is a human being and if he or she makes a little mistake because of workload, students are advised to be patient with him or her. For instance, Mark said, “I have to remember that they are doing me a favor. And if they have to work a little quickly, and not have to purify their language when they do it, it is actually on me to pass it”. Patient and thankful students might be many. It is generally known that a part of a

teacher's job is to provide feedback to their students. Mark is a teacher. He said, "But for someone who does not simply put any effort, why should I? But I have to because this is my job. It is my responsibility. I have to go with it to the limit where my responsibility is".

5.3.2.b. Feedback appreciation. Many students appreciate feedback provided by their professors. Many students are grateful for their teachers for providing feedback even if some feedback was not effective enough. For example, Mary said "I felt very greatly with each of those responses and the quality and quantity of my professors' comments". Many students could be thankful even when the feedback provided is a little bit harsh. For instance, Mark said,

They were fair. They were specific and almost nit-picky - I don't like this, I don't like that, this seems whatever - but all valid points. What they're doing is not taking a personal attack at you in any way.

Mark believes that even if some students might not be appreciative, such a reason should not be taken as a justification for not providing feedback. He said, "Regardless of what the students get back from feedback, you, as a teacher, still have responsibility to provide feedback because, this is great, does not answer the question".

5.3.3.c. Action on feedback. Action on feedback might be a goal of many teachers. All participants in this study have taken actions on feedback after receiving it. Some students choose to work on feedback provided as this feedback could lead to learning. Jane said "I rewrote the essay based on his comments. I tried to respond to almost every comment that he put in". Some other students act on feedback provided because they have to. For instance, Mary said, "I addressed all of the comments provided to me. They are my committee members and I had to defend this proposal". Mark believes that no matter how harsh feedback was, it should not stop

students from completing their learning episodes. He said, “I will decide to come back to the feedback and re-read it after I cool off. So it affects me but not stops me”.

5.3.4.d. Feedback effect on students. Feedback has effects on students. Feedback drives some students back to re-study basic issues to meet current standards of a learning episode. For example, Ally said, “I had to re-learn probably what I consider more advanced to grammar skills, and I was not expecting that for this kind of writing”. Feedback drives other students forward to meet future goals. Sarah said,

In terms of the learning experience, I did not change anything in the assignment because I already got the final mark. However, I did review the comments for future assignments. I definitely used the comments to help me in my future assignments.

Feedback sheds light on significant characteristics that students should have for future research. Mark said, “This feedback taught me to be passionate and clear. This feedback taught me to double check in everything”.

5.3.5.e. Feedback effectiveness. Effective feedback is required by most students. Feedback effectiveness may be perceived differently by different students. Some students need effective feedback that helps them learn. For example, Ally said,

The feedback that was helpful came from meetings with a group of people, who are going through the same thing. I am motivated by positive feedback, I mean feedback that really helps me progress forward, yea, What does this mean?, does not help me. I still need to know more.

Some other students want effective feedback to lead to a deeper relationship with the

provider. Robert said,

You can have someone who engages with a conversation with you through assessment, they can refer you to other materials to research, they can suggest you can look at other ideas, they can comment the work that has been done in class and what you are bringing into it. And that what I mean by positive feedback.

Mark stressed this idea by saying, “ I really have a fairly good relationship with this professor”. Other students want effective feedback to improve their grades. For instance, Sarah said, “Automatically I went to the grade. Then, I proceeded to review the comments. I didn’t care so much for the wording of the feedback. My professor gave me an essence fruit for thought”. Some students require effective feedback to strengthen their self-esteem. For example, Robert said, “I expect to be treated respectfully by whom so ever I am interacting with”.

5.3.3. Providing feedback looks easy

Under this theme, four sub-themes emerged: *student feelings, feedback sensitivity, feedback interpretations, and professor linguistic style on my assignment.*

5.3.3.a. Student feelings. Some of the feedback provided hurt some students’ feelings. For example, Mark stated, “When I read the feedback on my assignment, I felt crushed”. Some ineffective feedback might drive students to feel humiliated. For instance, Ally added, “I felt a little bit demeaned I think because of some of the comments”. Some students look past the harshness of feedback because they might think the feedback content is valuable. Mary said,

While I was going through my supervisor’s comments, I felt, I guess, confident. But another committee member wrote a lot of very extensive and very critical comments.

They were difficult for me to read. It was very hard and I was upset when I was reading them, but at the end, those hard critical comments, by far, were the most useful.

5.3.3.b. Feedback sensitivity. Some participants stressed the fact that feedback is a sensitive process. The strategies used in providing feedback, the choice of words, structure, the passive and active, the mood of the writer, the relationship between the provider and the receiver and the way the messages are written may all affect the feedback provided. For example, Jane said, “If your only interactions are only short notes, it is very important to be as clear as possible because there is plenty of opportunities for misunderstanding”. Some teachers may use pencil or illegible handwriting. Mark comments,

Some teachers use pencil or illegible handwriting or both and you look at this feedback and go, I have no idea what this is, and you end up having to go to the teacher in classroom or in his office and say: can you read this to me?.

5.3.3.c. Feedback interpretations. Many participants reported that feedback interpretation is one of the most common sub-themes because it happens almost every time a teacher provides feedback to his or her students. For example, Ally said,

When you write something, you can't really show emotions in that. So the other person at the other end of it is left to determine what the emotion is coming behind it. And it can be interpreted completely wrong. And that might not have been your intention. But it is open to interpretation on the person that is receiving it. WHEN MY WORDS HAVE BEEN TIED WITH MY HANDS, (*these words were said in a high pitch*) I prefer not to send e-mails. I am choosing my words in order to minimize

the possibility of being interpreted with a different linguistic style, than I am trying to type it out.

When providing feedback, participants agree that feedback providers should be clear enough for every student to understand them. Mark added, “It is not the student job to interpret my feedback”. However, in functional linguistics, it is generally known that “Hearer knows best”, which means a listener/ a reader knows the intentions of a speaker/writer because the speaker/writer leaves clues or hidden effects when he or she speaks or writes. Based on the readers’ knowledge of a language, they can interpret these clues and find out what was meant the sent message. Thus, a reader could understand these hidden messages and interpret them as positive or negative. This could become a problem when students read more than what was directly given to them. Therefore, they interpret the given message as they understand it because of these left clues. Although such clues might innocently be left by a speaker/writer, many students may understand the messages provided differently. Jane believes that “Interpretations of feedback depends on the listener and that is one reason why they might be different”.

Moreover, some participants interpreted feedback as ineffective because the writing was illegible so they had to go to the professor to read the feedback for them. For example, Mark said,

Going to a teacher and asking them to read their feedback on your assignment, you might feel it is rude to them, but it also feels rude to you because it says you couldn't bother writing clearly for the three sentences you put on the space of this paper, I spent three weeks drafting it in a word processor so that it looks clean and readable for you. So your feedback is either not worth enough or you think I don't worth

enough to write it for me nicely.

5.3.3.d. Professor linguistic style on my assignment. Some students reported that professor linguistic style on student assignment is a critical sub-theme. All participants were asked the following question: “On a scale from one to ten where one is ineffective and ten is very effective, how would you describe the linguistic style of written feedback you received on your assignment? Why?”. The participants’ second ratings previously mentioned can be seen as an evaluation by each participant of the linguistic style of his or her teacher. Nine ratings of participants have been collected from participants. Some students gave high ratings for their professors and others gave low ones. (See table 16 for the participants’ second ratings). For example, Jane rated high and said,

I would describe the linguistic style of the written feedback on my assignment as very effective, and I would give it a nine or eight out of ten because he went throughout the whole paper and the professor was pushing me to move ahead and learn. He was telling me what I need to do to pass my comprehensive exam and to satisfy my readers.

Table 16: *Participants' Second ratings on the importance of their professors' linguistic styles on making written feedback provided to the participants, on their assignments, effective. One is not important and ten is very important.*

Assignments	Participant's Name	Ratings from one to ten
1.	Jane	8.5
2. a	Mary	6
2. b	Mary	9
2. c	Mary	4
2. d	Mary	9
3.	Mark	8.5
4.	Ally	5
5.	Sarah	8
6.	Robert	6.5

Robert rated relatively low and said,

I would describe the linguistic style of the written feedback I received on my assignment as six point five because some of the feedback was good, and some of the feedback wasn't good. I felt it was a little bit "*wishy washy*". It didn't provide me with a lot of thinking, jumping off points, for reconsideration or re-discussion. You know, good job, doesn't cut it.

Mary rated high for her supervisor and her first committee member, who provided feedback on her fourth and second assignments respectively. She rated relatively low for her second committee member and low for the third member, who provided feedback on her first and third assignments respectively. She said,

I would mark the linguistic styles of my supervisor and first committee member who provided substantive commentary as very effective, nine. I would mark the linguistic

style of my second committee member as six. The feedback was useful, but not kind of a game changer for me. I would mark the linguistic style of my third committee member who I did not feel went in-depth, as maybe four.

Some students highlighted the importance of being respected. Mark said “I rate the effectiveness of the linguistic style on my assignment somewhere between an eight and nine because the feedback was clear, useful. But there were moments where this could have been said more nicely”. Some other students stressed the characteristics of good feedback that could be perceived as effective. For example, Sarah said,

I thought the linguistic style of the written feedback I received on my assignment was good. I would rate it eight out of ten because it was relevant and to the point. It was helpful, and that the point of feedback, to be helpful, developmental, easy to follow and understand, and motivating.

Although the feedback provided perceived as ineffective, some students want to be fair to their professors. For example, Ally commented “I would rate the linguistic style of the feedback I received on my assignment, five, and again I was trying to be fair”. These rates by each participant will be discussed in more detail in results integration.

5.3.4. Ineffective Feedback should be corrected

Under this broad theme, seven sub-themes have emerged: *Feedback format, feedback ineffectiveness, Actions on feedback ineffectiveness, feedback strategies, ineffective feedback consequences, feedback contradictions, and workshops on how to provide feedback.*

5.3.4.a. Feedback format. Many participants have agreed that teachers do differ in formatting their feedback. Some teachers may use imperative or interrogative statements other than declarative statements. For example, Sarah added,

I think my professor's wording of the feedback, first of all, was in terms of questions on the areas that I could improve on. He asked me questions to ponder on instead of just saying, this is right, or this is wrong, so I liked that.

Some teachers may prefer to use short notes, and others may write full statements. For example, Jane said,

I liked this part at the end because he has broken it up into three parts: comments, questions, and suggestions, which is nice. He has broken his feedback into the three previously mentioned parts, so it was easy for me to action.

5.3.4.b. Feedback ineffectiveness. Many students complain from receiving ineffective feedback. Some students reported that they perceived feedback as ineffective because it is general. For example, Ally said,

That feedback was not motivating at all. So the comments slowed me down. I was trying to be fair to the professor as well because the professor is not a horrible person, and I am not a horrible writer. It was a setback in some ways, but not of much of a setback as previous ones had been. But, yes, it was a bit of a shock and a bit defeating. This feedback from my professor was not helpful because it was not clear in some of their comments what my professor was asking me to do. A comment like, what does this mean?, is negative for me because it does not tell me anything and it is too general.

In addition, some participants communicated that they perceive feedback as ineffective because it is harsh. For instance, Mark added,

I don't like this feedback, Burnaby's stuff is getting fairly old. Go to Haque, because this is a command. It is like, close the door, I would prefer something like, Burnaby's is well respected, but you might want to bring in some....

Finally, some students stated that they perceive feedback as ineffective because it does not lead to real learning. Mary said, "The comments provided by both committee members number two and three, were fairly easy fixes, and they didn't have a long influence on me".

However, many students reported that they might tolerate such ineffective feedback to a relatively large extent. There are at least five reasons, which might work individually or in concert. These reasons could explain such tolerance: firstly, most students do respect their professors. Most participants stressed this idea. For example, Sarah said, "For a matter of respect, you don't tell a professor, you do this or you do that". Secondly, most students seek a high passing grade in a learning episode. If the students refused to accept literally any feedback given to them, they might end up with a failing grade, which will block any future development. Ally reported "If the mark is not good and the professor isn't happy, you will not be able to use them as a reference for any of scholarships inferences".

Thirdly, many students believe that a professor is not working against them, but he or she is helping them move to the next level. Mark said, "What they're doing is not taking a personal attack at you in any way. They certainly weren't taking an attack on me". Jane added, "He went throughout the whole paper and the professor was pushing me to move ahead and learn. He was telling me what I need to do to pass my comprehensive exam and to satisfy my

readers”. Fourthly, many students have good relationships with their professors. As a result, such students might accept any feedback even a harsh one from their professors. Mark added, “ I really have a fairly good relationship with this professor”.

Lastly, although valuable but harsh feedback is perceived as ineffective feedback by many students, some of them do cope with it. Mary reported, “The language that she conveyed with, yes, it was startling to read. But that does not matter in the overall framework because of the content”. As a result, many students believe the professor is the only person who can decide how much his or her student can tolerate.

5.3.4.c. Actions on feedback ineffectiveness. Actions on feedback ineffectiveness are highly recommended to be taken by students. After all, a professor is a human being. Some participants state that students should take this fact into consideration. If students receive feedback that is not ineffective, why not they discuss it with their feedback providers? It is the role of the student to take action in a case of ineffective feedback. For example, Jane said, “If the feedback is not clear, I would take an opportunity from whoever provides me with such feedback to discuss it with them”.

For another example, Mark reported,

If the students don't like the feedback, discuss it. If they do not understand the feedback, discuss it. If a teacher says to a student, go away, I don't like you, then that is unfortunate situation, but that is not the way a lot of people respond. If the students get pushed back, that is a problem in dealing with someone who is not really good in dealing with the process.

5.3.4.d. Feedback strategies. Most students have agreed that feedback strategies is an open-ended subject. Many teachers have adopted some successful strategies by teaching for many years, but the sky is the limit. Some participants prefer feedback to be like a conversation in which teachers and students exchange ideas. For example, Robert suggests feedback strategy by saying,

If I leave my reading of the feedback, with more to think about, then, it is time well-spent. First of all you don't correct all of mistakes. I would prefer the feedback to be like a dialogue for example, "that is an interesting point, why don't you go to this article? Or this other article? Have you thought about this?" I have only one example like this in all the feedback I have received.

Some other students chose to meet and discuss the feedback provided. For instance, Mary suggested a strategy she liked by saying, "My supervisor accompanied his comments by written request to meet and discuss as well. I liked the fact that we are going to meet and discuss it in person. To me what is valuable, is clear direct language".

Moreover, some students stressed the idea that the feedback provider should be in the heads of the receivers. Mark said,

The notion of you have to be in the reader's head to permeate what you are doing. The important message would be: I will discuss the feedback if you come to my office or make an appointment. Your comments should be written well. The whole notion of writing is for the reader, your comments should be written with the fact that your student is going to read them in mind.

Some participants did not like standardized feedback because it does not help students to be academic. For example, Mark added,

By using standardized feedback, a teacher will lose the big element of apprenticeship especially in postsecondary where we are here to model in part what it's like to be academic. It is not about learning the concepts, but learning the lifestyle.

5.3.4.e. Ineffective feedback consequences. Many students complain about ineffective feedback consequences. Some participants state that some teachers do provide their students with ineffective feedback deliberately. For example, Robert said,

If it is just about knocking people down, eventually, you are going to knock yourself down. As an undergraduate, I did have one professor, who gave me terrible feedback one time, which was undeserved. But tearing somebody to shreds for no reason other than building yourself up, it doesn't stand very long.

Some participants add that some teachers refused to help any more. Ally added,

There was a clear direct e-mail from the professor saying, I don't have time for this anymore, you need to find help somewhere else. Finally, it became very direct I don't have time any more. So, I think the professor is just overloaded.

Some participants highlight emotional problems that could affect a student as a result of negative and ineffective feedback. Jane suggested "When a student is left confused or emotionally scarred or whatever, then there is a problem. So they need to have some further communication".

5.3.4.f. *Feedback contradictions.* Feedback contradictions is a sub-theme that was not so popular among participants. Some participants in this study report that they received contradicted feedback. Some students reported contradictions in the feedback itself. For example, Jane said,

I think all through the paper, he was pushing me. He's challenging me and pushing me, he's critiquing me and that is the thing he needed to do. He says you have got to do better, you have got to think better, this is not clear enough, whatever all the way down to the very last sentence, then, in the last sentence, he said too broad. So, he is pushing me, pushing me, pushing me, pushing me, pushing me, pushing me, In the last sentence, Oh! You can't do that. I didn't like that.

Some other participants report contradictions in the professor's behavior. For instance, Ally wrote in her assignment, many believe blab bla bla, and her professor wrote, many what?,dangling", Ally was confused dangling modifier, adjective, noun, or what? However on another whole paragraph the professor wrote "what does this mean?" Ally was confused again because she could not understand what the word "this" refers to. It could be idea, example, paragraph, concept and many other options. In other words, Ally believes her professor made the same mistake, which she underlined for Ally.

5.3.4.g. *Workshops on how to provide feedback.* Workshops on how to provide feedback looks like a controversial subject. When many teachers may believe that they can provide feedback to their students, most of participants in this study believe the opposite. For example, Mark suggested "many university professors do need workshops in how to provided written feedback to their students. I think it is worth doing".

Gaining a PhD does not necessarily mean that one can teach. Ally supported Mark's idea and she said that

If somebody may have earned a PhD, and that allows them to teach, it does not mean they are a teacher. I think many professors need a lot of training, practice, and workshops on how to give feedback. I have found that they have been the best teachers, the people that have had a lot of personal interaction rather than just the theoretical background.

5.3.5. Feedback is a Shared Responsibility

Three sub-themes emerged under this theme: Feedback goal, Professor position, and Student role.

5.3.5.a. Feedback goal. Many students highlight that feedback goal should be clearly stated from the very beginning of a learning episode. Because feedback is a shared responsibility between a teacher and a student, either of them can state the goal of feedback. For example, Jane was told by her professor about the feedback goal. She reported, "This assignment was not about passing a course, this was about developing our commitment and aptitude to scholars. This is an exercise for preparing us to write for publication".

However, it was Mark who told his professor about the feedback goal. He clarified,

I wasn't too concerned about the grade I was going to get, but I expressed to the professor that I was considering trying to publish. Thus, getting a good grade is not always the ultimate goal of each student". Mark added "You want to encourage students' behaviors, you want to encourage creativity.

5.3.5.b. Professor Position. According to some participants, professor's position should not be interpreted only for the benefit of a professor, it should be for the benefit of both a professor and a student. For example, some students believed that because a professor is an authority, he or she should be respected. Part of that respect, no student is allowed even to provide him or her with feedback or even to share ideas with them. Sarah stressed this idea by saying,

For a matter of respect, you don't tell a professor, you do this, or you do that, I don't understand why I would be giving feedback to a professor anyways. Unless you are doing a course of evaluation. When would a student ever be giving feedback to a professor on an assignment?.

However, students also should be respected. Robert shed light on his idea by saying

You can be an authority of what you know, but that doesn't make you an authority of what I know. If someone is an authority or not, they have to use the proper way of giving in terms of choice of language. I expect to be treated respectfully by whomsoever I am interacting with". The key words here are mutual respect.

5.3.5.c. Student Role. Most participants explained that a student role on the feedback provided should be encouraged by his or her teacher. Students might be shy. Students might think it is disrespectful to talk to your professor about the feedback you received. Some students think their professor is fully loaded, and they do not want to put extra burdens on him or her. Other students believe their professor will think they are complaining about the feedback provided. Such barriers and many others prevent students from talking to their professors.

However, if a professor makes sure that all these previous obstacles have been removed from the way of a student, it becomes the student responsibility to work on the

feedback provided. Mark elucidated, “It's on the student to work with what they get back. Students have to take an active role in what they're doing. Unless it is perfect feedback, and they understand it completely, it has not fulfilled its role”.

Summary

Interviewing participants and emerging themes were of great importance for this study as the participants were the ones who were going to decide which feedback was effective, less effective, or ineffective. They were the ones who were going to give the reasons for these decisions. The five emerging themes of *Linguistic style is part of feedback, students require effective feedback, providing feedback looks easy, ineffective feedback should be corrected, and feedback is a shared responsibility*. And their sub-themes assisted the results from the systemic coder in answering research questions 2,3,and 4. The following section discusses the integration of results.

5.4. Results Integration

Based on the research questions, all collected feedback points were analyzed to identify how each of the three language aspects (field, tenor, mode) affects the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students. Results obtained from the systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002) of feedback points on each assignment will be compared with results obtained from interviewing the owner of the same assignment. I integrate these results to justify the participants' ratings of professors' linguistic styles on students' assignments previously mentioned. In addition, this integration will provide us with an answer to when feedback is perceived as effective. To achieve these goals, two questions will be answered. The first question is about the benefits of integrating both the method of the systemic coder

(O'Donnell, 2002) with the method of interviewing participants in this qualitative study. The second question is about when feedback is perceived as effective.

5.4.1. Benefits of integrating methods. To answer the first question, I compare the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings Means for each assignment to the Means of the whole sample.

5.4.1.a. Ideational Meanings. Ideational features will be categorized as follows: 1. Ideational Meanings 1 (Id. M. 1). These features help feedback perceived as effective when they are used more. These features include material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization. 2. Ideational Meanings 2 (Id. M. 2). These are the features that help feedback perceived as effective when they are used less. These features are as follows: behavioral process, relational process, and active voice.

Id. M. 1 for the assignments of Jane, Ally, Sarah, and Mary's first, third and fourth assignments had higher MA than MS. These features had SD of 0.09, 0.01, 0.05, 0.09, 0.02, and 0.04 respectively. This was a reason for the high ratings of these participants except in the cases of Ally, who rated five with SD of 0.01. In addition to Mary, who rated four for her fourth assignment with SD of 0.02. (See Appendix M for ideational meanings for every assignment).

Id. M. 2 for Jane's, Sarah's, Mary's first, second, and fourth assignments, MA was higher than MS and therefore more effective. SD were 0.22, .05, 0.05, 0.01, and 0.06 respectively. This stated another reason for the high ratings for these participants except Mary, who rated six for her third assignment with SD of 0.01. However, Ally had MA higher than MS for Id. M. 2. With SD of 0.03. She rated five. This result explained her low rating.

5.4.1.b. Interpersonal Meanings. Interpersonal features will be categorized as follows: 1. Interpersonal Meanings 1 (Int. M. 1). These are the features that help feedback perceived as effective when they are used more. These features include declarative statements, interrogative statements and modality. 2. Interpersonal Meanings 2 (Int. M. 2). These are the features that help feedback perceived as effective when they are used less. These features are as follows: imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words.

Int. M. 1 for Robert's, Ally's, Mark's, and Mary's second assignments had higher MA than MS. SD were 0.04, 0.03, 0.02, and 0.02 respectively. This explained the high ratings of Mark and Mary on her second assignment. It also explained why Ally and Robert did not rate higher than five and 6.5 respectively. (See Appendix N for interpersonal meanings for every assignment).

Int. M. 2 for Jane's, Ally's, and Mary's first and fourth assignments had MA lower than MS. Therefore, the feedback on them was more effective than the feedback on the whole sample. SD were 0.04, 0.01, 0.01, and 0.06 respectively. Such results explained why Jane rated 8.5 and Mary rated 9 her first assignment. It also stated why Ally did not rate beyond five and did not rate beyond 4 on her fourth assignment.

5.4.1.c. Textual Meanings. Textual features will be categorized as follows: 1. Textual Meanings 1 (Text. M. 1). These features help feedback to be perceived as effective when they are used more. These features include lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. 2. Textual Meanings 2 (Text. M. 2). These features help feedback perceived as effective when they are used less. These features refer to grammatical intricacy in this study.

Text. M. 1 for Mark's, Robert's, and Mary's first and second assignments had MA higher than MS. SD were 0.03, 0.02, 0.01, and 0.02 respectively. These results justified the high ratings of Mark, and Mary on her first and second assignments, which were 8.5, 9, and 9 respectively. They also explained why Robert did not rate higher than 6.5. (See Appendix O for Textual meanings for every assignment).

Text. M. 2 for Sarah's, Jane's, Robert's, and Mary's first and third assignments had MA higher than MS. As a result, the feedback on these assignments was perceived more effective than the feedback on the whole sample. SD were 0.07, 0.07, 0.02, 0.01, and 0.02 respectively. This is a justification for the high ratings on Sarah's and Mary's first assignments, which were 8 and 9 respectively. This result also explained why the ratings of Robert and Mary on her third assignments did not go beyond 6.5 and 6 respectively.

In this study, we followed (Englander, 2006), who used the systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002) with systemic functional linguistics. The coder helped her explaining why some scientific articles written by non-native speakers of English were rejected for publication. The coder was also applied on our data in a similar way to Englander to study the three language aspects of field, tenor, and mode. As demonstrated earlier, the integration of results from the coder and the participants' interviews was significant. It helped us explain and justify the participants' low or high ratings on the importance of professors' linguistic styles in making written feedback on students' assignments perceived as more or less effective.

5.4.2. *When is feedback perceived by students as effective?* The integrated results in this study indicated that students may perceive feedback as effective in at least four scenarios: firstly, feedback should enhance learning. For example, the Means for id. M. 1 for Jane's, Sarah's, and

Mary's first, third and fourth assignments had higher MA than MS. Therefore, such feedback was perceived as effective.

Secondly, feedback should improve students' grades. For example, Ally reported that she seeks to achieve a high mark at the end of her learning episode because such a high grade will improve the chances of getting a scholarship for future development. The systemic coder showed us that the ideational interpersonal and the textual meanings of the feedback provided to Ally were perceived as less effective than the whole sample. Such results justified why Ally did not like the feedback provided because she was after the grade.

Thirdly, feedback should strengthen the student self-esteem. For example, Mark, and Robert reported that the feedback they received on their assignments was tough. The systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002) showed us that the interpersonal meaning for all feedback provided to these participants was not effective enough.

Finally, feedback should lead to a deeper relationship between provider and receiver. For example, Mary reported that she had good relationship with both her supervisor and her first committee member. Results from the coder confirmed that the interpersonal meanings for the feedback provided on Mary's second and fourth assignments were high. This provided a reason why Mary perceived such feedback as effective.

5.5. Summary of the chapter

The ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings are found to do affect positively and negatively the effectiveness of written feedback provided on student assignments by their

professors because of the added positive or negative effects. For example, if the following ideational meanings, material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization, of the feedback provided are high, it is more likely for this feedback to be perceived by students as effective. As reported by Mary, Jane, and Sarah, these high ideational meanings improve students' grades and enhance their learning. However, if the following ideational meanings, behavioral process, relational process, and active voice, of the feedback provided are high, it is more likely for this feedback to be perceived as ineffective.

For another example, if the following interpersonal meanings, declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality, of feedback provided are high, it is more likely for such feedback to be perceived by students as effective. Such feedback strengthens the student self-esteem and is more likely to lead to a deeper relationship between provider and receiver as this was reported by Mary, Mark, Ally, and Robert. But if the following interpersonal meanings, imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words, are high, then such feedback is more likely to be perceived as ineffective.

For the last example, if the following textual meanings, lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis, of the feedback provided are high, then such a feedback is more likely to be perceived as effective. This feedback also could improve grades and enhance learning as reported by Mary, Jane, and Sarah. However, the perceived effectiveness of feedback correlates negative with the textual meaning of grammatical intricacy.

In addition, many students do require effective feedback. Once they receive it, they do appreciate it. They are willing to take actions on it. However, once the feedback provided is ineffective, many students are willing to justify and tolerate it for at least five reasons as follows:

1. Respecting professors. 2. Seeking a high grade in a learning episode. 3. Moving to the next level. 4. Having good relationships with their professors. 5. Accepting valuable but harsh feedback. However the professor is the only one who can decide how much his or her student can tolerate. There is a call for each professor to know his or her students. If a professor neglects such a need, he or she might unintentionally drive a student to end up with intolerable consequences such as leaving a learning episode or the whole program. Or even worse like psychological problems and their negative outcomes.

Finally, many students do believe that feedback is sensitive to many issues like a professor linguistic style, a student background, a student learning style. In addition, feedback provider needs to have some skills in feedback formatting, and the use of feedback strategies. Therefore, many students believe that workshops for professors on how to provide feedback and for students on how to receive feedback, are highly recommended.

Chapter Six

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, both the qualitative results, obtained from interviews, and the quantitative results, address my research questions. They explained how a professor's linguistic style could affect positively or negatively the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to students on their assignments. Results from the quantitative data demonstrated how the perceived effectiveness of feedback provided to students is positively associated with the three aspects of language: field through ideational meanings, tenor through interpersonal meanings, and mode through textual meanings. The following sections will demonstrate and discuss the four research questions in this study: 1. How frequently do professors use ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their written feedback to graduate students? 2. How do the ideational meanings of field affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?, 3. How do the interpersonal meanings of tenor affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students? , and 4. How do the textual meanings of mode affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

6.1. How frequently do professors use ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their written feedback to graduate students?

6.1.1. Ideational Meanings. In this study, ideational meanings include processes, participants, active and passive statements, and nominalization. In processes, to realize the relational process, Halliday (2008) proposed some verbs such as the following: *mean, indicate, suggest, imply, show, mark, reflect, make, include, represent, form, exemplify, illustrate, express, signify, realize.* An example of relational process is like saying "Include an example". This feedback point is

relational because its focus is on the being (Halliday, 2008), as if you were saying, “An example is being missing”.

To help us realize the material process, Halliday (2008) proposed some verbs as follows: *do, spring, catch, resign, dissolve, combine, play, go, fetch, fall, break, mend, etc.* Examples of material process are like saying “Give an example”, or “Reduce the length of this paragraph”. Halliday argues such examples provide clearer direction as their focus is on the doing. Material process helps students to better understand the message sent by their teacher because it answers the question “what to do?” (e.g. Englander, 2006; Halliday, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hyland, 2003).

Halliday (2008) argues that the following verbs can help us realize the behavioral process: *look, watch, stare, listen, think, worry, dream, chatter, grumble, talk, cry, laugh, smile, frown, sigh, snarl, whine, breathe, cough, faint, shit, yawn, sleep, sing, dance, lie, sit, etc.* In a feedback point such as “Look at the first paragraph, please”, this feedback focuses just on behaving. Therefore; it might not be helpful enough to students as it does not tell students what to do.

It is argued that in ideational meanings, the more we use non-human participants, passive voice and nominalization, the more positive effects we add to our messages. Such ideational meanings are more likely to make these messages perceived as more effective because these messages will be clearer, less directive, less judgmental, and more formal depending on the context (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1986, 2008; Thompson, 2004). This shows that the higher the use of human participants, active voice, and non-nominalization, the less effective our messages are likely to be perceived because of the negative effects added. In this sample, the

ideational meanings for the entire sample was relatively low. (See Appendix M for Ideational meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

6.1.2. Interpersonal Meanings. Interpersonal meanings include types of statements, modality, personal pronoun and evaluative words. It is argued that high use of declarative and interrogative statements, low use of imperative statements, high use of modality, and low use of personal pronouns and evaluative words in texts can lead to a more effective communication among participants. This is because of the added positive effects resulted from employing interpersonal meanings, which can make our messages perceived as more friendly, less directive, less judgmental, and more informal depending on the context (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 2008; Thompson, 2004). In this sample, the Means for the use of declarative statements was relatively high, but the Mean for the use of interrogative statements was relatively low. And the Mean for the use of imperative statements was low. Thus, the use of both declarative and imperative statements was effective, but the use of interrogative statements was less effective. (See Appendix N for interpersonal meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

Modality plays an important role when providing feedback because it enriches the interpersonal meaning among communicators by adding positive effects (e.g. Eggins, 2004). To evaluate written feedback as effective, one expects higher use of modality. In this sample, modality was used poorly.

The use of personal pronouns and evaluative words in providing written or oral messages are highly sensitive (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2004). Excessive use of pronouns

and/or evaluative words can be easily interpreted as judgmental messages, which are more likely to be perceived by students as negative or ineffective message (e.g. Black & Wiliam, 2009). The less personal pronouns and evaluative words, including positive or negative words, we use in our messages, the more effective these messages are likely to be perceived by students because of neutralizing unnecessary negative effects added (e.g., Halliday, 2008). In this sample, the use of personal pronoun was relatively high. But the use of evaluative words was relatively low.

6.1.3. Textual Meanings. Textual meanings, in our study, include lexical density, grammatical intricacy, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis.

Lexical density refers to the number of nouns, main verbs, adjectives, and adverbs divided by the complete number of words in a text. High lexical density is a main feature of written texts. It is typically higher than 40% in written text and lower than 40% in spoken texts (Castello, 2008). Eggins (2004) argues that the more lexical density in our written texts, the more they are likely to be perceived as they are meant without the non-required added effects. In this sample, lexical density was relatively low. (See Appendix O for textual meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments).

Grammatical intricacy, which refers “to the number of clauses in each statement” (Eggins, 2004, p. 97) is another differentiating feature of texts. Written texts typically have low grammatical intricacy, but spoken texts typically have high grammatical intricacy (Castello, 2008). Grammatical intricacy can be figured out by dividing the number of clauses in a text on the complete number of statements/sentences in the same text. The less grammatical intricacy can help our written texts to be perceived as they are meant without unnecessary negative effects

(e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 2008). In our sample, grammatical intricacy was high. (Check Appendix J for Lexical Density and Grammatical Intricacy Means for each Assignment).

Cohesion plays a vital role in interpersonal meaning particularly in written texts. Cohesion is known as the internal organization of a text (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In written feedback, if the provided message was “What is this?” and a student was not able to know what the word “This” refers to, it is said that the text lacks cohesion. In this sample, cohesion was relatively poor. The more the cohesion in a text, the more effective it is likely to be perceived (e.g., Halliday, 2008). The Mean for the use of cohesion was relatively low. (See Appendix O for textual meanings).

Textual adjuncts can add textual meanings to the organization of the message itself, which may increase cohesion in a text and may improve understanding (e.g. Thompson, 2004). They are words such as *however*, *nevertheless*, and *in other words*. They usually occur at the beginning of a sentence, but they can change position. In addition, they link clauses to clause complexes. They include: *because*, *if*, *when*, *although*, *and*, *but*, *before*, *as*, and *since* (e.g. Eggins, 2004). It is expected to have high use of textual adjuncts in an effective written feedback. Eggins (2004) explains that the higher the use of textual adjuncts in a text, the more effective it is likely to be perceived because of the positive effects added. In this sample, textual adjuncts were poorly used. (See Appendix O).

Emphasis is an important textual feature of written texts. It can be expressed by Theme/Rheme strategies (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1985). For example, writers typically emphasize an issue by introducing it first to the readers. Some other writers may choose to emphasize an issue by delaying it. In addition, the use of passive or active voice is another

strategy for emphasis. Repetition of words could also indicate emphasis. In an effective written feedback, it is expected to find high use of emphasis. The higher the use of emphasis, the more effective our message is likely to be perceived because of positive effects added (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 2008; Thompson, 2004). In this sample, emphasis was inadequately used. (Check Appendix O).

Results from the systemic coder (O'Donnell, 2002) indicate that most professors inadequately use the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings when providing graduate students with written feedback. The fluctuation in using these meanings shows that some professors might use them accidentally and without previous knowledge. For example, in the case of Jane's assignment, one can see that both Interpersonal meanings 1 and 2 for the assignment (MA) are lower than them for the entire sample (MS). (See Appendix N for interpersonal meanings). Textual meanings 1 and 2 for the assignment (MA) are lower than them for the entire sample (MS). (See Appendix O for Textual meanings).

6.2. How do the ideational meanings of field affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

Results show that the ideational meanings of field can be divided into at least two parts: ideational meanings 1, and ideational meanings 2. Ideational meanings 1 refer to language features that are found to help written feedback provided to be perceived by students as effective. These features include material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization. This finding is in accordance with Functional Linguistics researchers (e.g., Eggins, 2004). ; Halliday, 2008; Thompson, 2004). As a result, professors are advised to logically increase the use of these features while providing written feedback to their students.

Ideational meanings 2 refer to language features that are found to help written feedback provided to students to be perceived as ineffective. These features are behavioral process, relational process, and active voice. Halliday (2008) argues that unlike material process, behavioral and relational processes do not tell the listener what to do next. Similarly, the use of active voice could be interpreted as judgmental because of the negative effects usually accompany it (e.g., Thompson, 2004). Feedback providers are requested to logically reduce the use Ideational meanings 2.

The perceived effectiveness of feedback that improves student grades and learning outcomes correlates positively with the ideational meanings of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization. However, feedback perceived effectiveness correlates negatively with the ideational meanings of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice,

6.3. How do the interpersonal meanings of tenor affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

Interpersonal meanings 1 are found to positively affect feedback effectiveness. These language features refer to declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality. These features help the written feedback provided to students to be perceived as effective. Functional linguists stress the role of interpersonal meanings 1 as they motivate students to accept and work on the feedback provided (e.g., Brookhart, 2008; Hyland, 2006). It is recommended that professors logically increase the use of these meanings.

Interpersonal meanings 2 are found to affect feedback negatively. They refer to language features that help students perceive feedback provided on their assignments as

ineffective. These features include imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words. Wiliam (2011) argues that when the imperative style of language is used in providing feedback, the feedback provided becomes un-motivating to students. Black and Wiliam (2009) explain that when students receive un-motivating feedback, they act against it to protect their egos. It is suggested that professors logically reduce the use of interpersonal meanings 2.

The perceived effectiveness of feedback that protects student self-esteem, and leads to a good relationship with feedback provider correlates positively with the following interpersonal meanings, declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality, of feedback provided. But feedback effectiveness correlates negatively with the following interpersonal meanings: imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words.

6.4. How do the textual meanings of mode affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students?

Textual meanings 1 are found to affect feedback provided positively. They are language features that help students perceive feedback on their assignments as effective. These features include lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. These features add positive effects to language (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2004) so professors are advised to logically increase their use when providing written feedback.

Textual meanings 2 are found to affect written feedback negatively. They refer to grammatical intricacy. Such language features are found to assist students comprehend the feedback provided as ineffective because of the negative effects they possess (e.g., Halliday, 2008; Thompson, 2004). Professors are recommended to decrease the use of grammatical intricacy when providing written feedback.

The perceived effectiveness of feedback that improves student grades and learning outcomes also correlates positively with the textual meanings of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. However, it correlates negatively with the textual meaning of grammatical intricacy.

Summary

The previous sections of 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 were explained individually for the sake of explaining and relating results to the four research questions in this study. However, these language aspects of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings do not work individually, on the contrary, they work in concert. All these language aspects are built in each utterance. For this reason, the following section of interviewing participants and emerging themes gains its importance. It is the participants who can decide whether feedback provided is perceived as effective, less effective, or ineffective. For example, they alone can decide whether the linguistic style of a professor can or cannot affect the feedback provided. The following section will discuss in detail all the five emerging themes.

6.5. Emerging Themes from qualitative data.

Qualitative results obtained from interviews through the five themes emerged in the results section are as follows: *1. linguistic style is part of feedback, 2. Students require effective feedback, 3. Providing feedback looks easy, 4. Ineffective feedback should be corrected, and 5. Feedback is a shared responsibility.* These emerging themes are important as they help explaining the second, third, and fourth research questions as follows.

6.5.1. Linguistic style is part of feedback. Linguistic style of a professor plays a major role in changing an effective message into an ineffective one because linguistic style of a speaker/writer

is an integral part of the content of the message, he or she seeks to convey (e.g., Eggins, 2004, Halliday, 2008; Thompson, 2004). All participants preferred some ways over others while providing or receiving feedback because of positive or negative hidden messages. For example, Mark supported this idea when he said that what has been said by his professor, could have been said “More nicely”. One big difference between saying something nicely or harshly is not in the message itself, but in the effect that message leaves. When a message said nicely, it is more likely to leave positive effects on its receivers. These effects are more likely to motivate the receivers to do positive action. For example, continue learning. In the same vein, when a message is said harshly, it is more likely to leave the receivers with unnecessary and not meant negative effects. As a result, the receivers will be motivated to do negative actions, for instance, stop leaning.

A main feature of effective feedback is being motivating for students to continue learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2006; Brookhart, 2008). Some students are only motivated by positive messages. For example, Ally reported that she is a kind of person that is only motivated by positive feedback. She also added that when she reads a message, she could imagine the face of the writer when he or she wrote that message. Thus, professors are advised to always use motivating style to promote students to continue learning.

A student preference of one style over another in providing written feedback is not just a matter of likes or dislikes, it goes deeper than that. When a student prefers one way of feedback providing, this way is more likely to be less harsh, less judgmental, less directive, and more to the point (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009). The feedback is not directed to him or her or to his or her performance (e.g., Sadler, 2010). Instead, the feedback is directed to the task in hand. Moreover, a student loves to be treated as a human being not as an article (Hyland, 2006). Finally, many

students prefer one style over another in providing written feedback because they think one style urges more thinking than another. These features are requested to be taken into consideration by professors if their final goal is to provide effective feedback.

6.5.2. Students require effective feedback. When students receive feedback from their professors, some of them may appreciate that feedback. For example, Jane felt so happy when she got the feedback of her professor on her assignment. She also felt happier when she noticed that he went through all her paper. As a result, she reported that she worked on each feedback point as much as she could (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009). Mary stated that it was startling for her to read some of the feedback provided to her, but she realized that it was useful. Therefore, she appreciated that feedback provided.

All participants spent much effort to meet the feedback provided. For example, Ally stated that she had to go back and study advanced grammar. Although Ally did not feel it was necessary for her specialization, which will be kept secret to protect her identity, she did study advanced grammar to meet her professor's expectations. Some students might find such a requirement too difficult, which might lead them to stop learning. Ally added that in many occasions, she thought of leaving the whole program (e.g., Bailey & Garner, 2010). Ally mentioned that she came back to school after a long time to learn. She might be not fully prepared, but she has the will to go on. This is an advice for professors to put more energy on students who are stuck. Simply if those students found help in the past, they would have not failed at present. Learning should be directed at all students, but the focus should be on those who were unlucky to find help.

Some students may perceive feedback as effective if it meets at least one of the following scenarios: 1. Enhancing their learning. 2. Helping them achieve a higher grade in a learning episode. 3. Protecting their self-esteem. 4. Leading to a good relationship with the feedback provider. These findings are completely supported in formative assessment literature (e. g. Black & Wiliam, 2009; Carless, 2006; Piccinin, 2003; Shute, 2008; Wiliam, 2011). For example, Piccinin (2003) argues that all the above scenarios have to work in concert to achieve effective feedback. However, there are two main points are to be highlighted based on results from this study: firstly, effective feedback can be perceived by students even if only one of the above scenario was achieved. For example, if the feedback provided only improved a student grade, it is more likely to be perceived as effective. Secondly, once one scenario takes place, the other scenarios are more likely to happen. For example, when the feedback provided improves a student grade, that student is more likely to feel self-respected, and might want to learn more, and improve his or her relationship with feedback provider. Thus, professors are requested to have in mind at least one of the above mentioned scenarios when providing feedback to their students.

6.5.3. Providing feedback looks easy. Many professors and students may realize that providing feedback is not an easy process (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2006; Carless, 2006; Hyland, 2003; Sadler, 2010; Shute, 2008). Feedback sensitivity is a main reason that makes providing feedback to students difficult. For example, Jane reported that proving feedback is not an easy process because of the many interpretations that may happen.

When proving feedback to students, only few feedback providers realize that they are talking to a person or a human being (e.g., Brookhart, 2007, 2008; Hyland, 2003). Such a case could be seen as a normal result because of the many tasks put on a professor or a teacher. Some

of these tasks are required from students such as feedback quantity, quality, appropriate language and respect. Other tasks are required from Faculties such as teaching, testing, time constraints, number of students in each class, number of assignments in each learning episode, and other administrative required tasks. We have to remember that a professor or a teacher is a human being. However, as a professor or a teacher is a human being, a student is also a human being. He or she has feelings that should not be hurt for any reason especially if the goal is to teach him or her. Ally described her opinion by saying that her professor was not a horrible person, and Ally added that she was not a horrible writer.

A suggestion to faculties and stakeholders to give more attention to professors and teachers in reducing the number students in each class, the number of tests in each learning episode, the number of administrative tasks. Another suggestion to professors and teachers to try to choose their appropriate words and appropriate linguistic style as much as they can. Such a choice is more likely to help professors avoid using words that might have double meanings. Simply, one can never know which meaning the student will understand. As a result, if stakeholders or professors fail to meet such requirements, the student will be the main victim.

6.5.4. Ineffective feedback should be corrected. A linguistic style of one professor is expected to be different from another professor, and that is very normal. One professor might use active voice, another might apply the passive. One professor might employ declarative or interrogative statements, and another might utilize the imperative. One professor might be accustomed to using phrases while another professor might be using full sentences. As one professor might use lots of evaluative words, another professor might prefer not to use them. However, the big challenge for a teacher is to know when and why these strategies can be applied to at least provide clear messages, which are more likely to be understood. Ally reported that obtaining a

PhD does not necessarily mean that one can teach. Mark supported this idea by saying that many professors need workshops on how to provide feedback. It is recommended that many professors attend workshops on how to provide and receive feedback.

Many professors do not recognize that ineffective feedback is harmful to students (e.g., Bailey & Garner, 2010; Carless, 2006). It could drive students to stop learning. Robert reported that the ineffective, undeserved feedback he once had got while he had been at his undergraduate study could have led him to complete failure and program leaving. Imagine how powerful was that ineffective feedback that Robert is still hurt till today and after all these years. Ally stated a similar experience with her professor by saying everybody I meet at school advises me to start a PhD program after I am done with my masters except my supervisor. It is really strange how a professor or a teacher can claim to know the hidden potentials of a student. I think there is no acceptable reason that may allow a person to take full responsibility of destroying the future of somebody else. Simply, if one student did not work properly with one professor, he or she might do better with another professor. Professors are requested to avoid providing ineffective feedback like the one that was given to Robert or making destroying decisions or opinions like the one that was given to Ally.

6.5.5. Feedback is a shared responsibility. At the beginning of a learning episode, students should be familiar with the goals they seek to achieve (e.g., Sadler, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). As a facilitator, a professor is the one, who usually holds responsibility of assuring that his or her students recognize such goals. For example, Jane was told by her professor that the formative feedback on her assignment was not only for getting a passing grade, but also it was for preparing her to publish. As a result, Jane accepted the feedback provided on her assignment as it guided her to the points she missed in her first draft. It is generally known that when somebody

does not know where to go, he or she will never reach. Similarly, if students are not familiar with the goals to be accomplished, they will not recognize whether the feedback provided to them is effective or ineffective.

However, many professors may welcome students to add some more goals. For example, Mark requested his professor to check his final assignment for publication other than only passing that learning episode. Although Mark reported that he felt “crushed” when he read the feedback provided on his assignment, he accepted that feedback. He stated that he was reminding himself that the professor was making him a favor. Robert reported his story about one professor who motivated him to continue high studies just by providing oral feedback through speaking to him in the corridor. Mary recognized near the end of her project that the feedback provided to her by her first committee member was the most useful although she previously thought that feedback was startling to read. Jane, Mark, Robert, and Mary are so thankful to their professors and they have good relationships with them. Such examples demonstrated that if these four professors could enhance the learning of these students, improve their grades, respect their self-esteem, and make good relationships that affected these students positively forever, all professors are requested to do so.

Summary

The previously emerging five themes were significant for this study as these themes reflected the voice of the participants. For example, it is the participants who decided that the linguistic style of a professor is part of the content of the feedback provided and it can affect its effectiveness. For another example, the participants agreed that they required effective feedback and they were ready to take action of it. For a final example, the participants said that feedback

was a shared responsibility between the professor and the student. These results and other emerging themes were reflected by the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. They played together to answer research questions 2,3, and 4.

6.6. Study Implications

This study was conducted in response to the relative dearth of literature on the perceived effectiveness of written language used in providing formative feedback to students at the graduate level. The results of this study provided new evidence that supports the functionality of the language “Theory of Register” (Halliday, 1985) in the formative feedback and assessment field. In addition, it provided professors with adequate description rather than prescription about the nature of the appropriate language that they may use to provide their students with feedback that is more likely to be perceived as effective.

This study does not underestimate professors and their skills. On the contrary, it is intended to increase their language options. It may even motivate them to use what they already have in a more appropriate and recognized way. Such a use will more likely produce more perceived effective communication with their students, which will enhance learning (Black & Wiliam 2001; Sadler, 2009). More implications are to come in the concluding remarks.

6.7. Limitations and Further Directions for research

1. Although all participants in this study were chosen from the Faculty of Education at one university, this is a limitation, but also a strength. It is a limitation in that other faculties might have different inputs as every faculty members are expected to have their own ways in providing feedback, which might differ in quantity and quality from the one obtained in this study. But it is a strength that the results found in this faculty might be generalized to similar situations.

However, there is a need for more research to investigate other Faculties and different universities to understand if the role of professor linguistic style in feedback providing is still important. Such investigation would help many professors to realize the need for using functional language while providing feedback.

2. All participants were using English as their first language. Intercultural students are needed to be investigated to explore how professor linguistic style might affect them. Will they understand language nuances and be affected positively or negatively? Or will they find the language neutral and be not affected? This knowledge might help professors to pay more attention while providing feedback to intercultural students.

3. Although interviewing six participants and collecting their nine assignments were enough to answer the research questions presented in this research, more participants are needed to be interviewed and more assignments to be collected to generalize results. Such generalization would assist decision makers to provide many professors with effective workshops on how to provide written feedback to students.

4. This study is a new addition to the literature of written feedback. It established the connection between language in Systemic Functional Linguistics and educative feedback in the domain of education. However, more research is needed on investigating how professors provide feedback, what affects them, and why the process of feedback providing is different from one professor to another? This knowledge might help professors realize the differences among themselves in feedback providing. Therefore; they might improve their skills by adopting new strategies. More importantly, it might help students to understand and adapt themselves to different styles of professors. Such understanding and adaptation might help students interpret the feedback provided to them as effective.

6.8. Concluding Remarks

The added positive or negative effects associated with each ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings are found to affect the perceived effectiveness of written feedback provided to students. Professors, on the one hand, are highly advised to recognize and increase the use of the ideational meanings of material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization; the interpersonal meanings of declarative statements, interrogative statements, and modality; in addition to the textual meanings of lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. These language aspects are found to help students perceive feedback provided as effective.

On the other hand, professors are highly recommended to recognize and decrease the use of the ideational meanings of behavioral process, relational process, and active voice; the interpersonal meanings of imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words; and the textual meanings of grammatical intricacy. Such language features were found to assist students comprehend the feedback provided as ineffective.

Feedback is perceived effective when it helps students to improve their grades, to enhance their learning, to respect their self-esteem, or to lead to a good relationship with the provider. However, ineffective feedback might drive a student to leave a learning episode, stop learning, or psychological consequences. Such results put responsibility on professors who are requested to stick to providing effective feedback to their students. Attending workshops on how to provide feedback is highly recommended for many professors.

References

- Agius, N. M., & Wilkinson, A. (2014). Students' and teachers' views of written feedback at undergraduate level: A literature review. *Nurse Education Today*, 34, 552–559.
- Alamis, M.P. (2010). Evaluating students' reactions and responses to teachers' written feedbacks. *Philippine ESL Journal* 5, 40–57.
- Assessment Reform Group. (1999). *Assessment for learning: Beyond the Black Box*. Cambridge: Cambridge University School of Education.
- Bailey, R., & Garner, M.(2010). Is the feedback in higher education assessment worth the paper it is written on? Teachers' reflections on their practices. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(2), 187–198.
- Bell, B., & Cowie, B. (2001). The characteristics of formative assessment in science education. *Science Education*, 85(5), 536-553.
- Bell, B., & Gilbert, J. (1996). *Teacher development*. London: Falmer Press.
- Bevan, R., Bage, J., Cann, A., Willmott, C., & Scott, J. (2008). Seeing eye-to-eye? Staff and students' views on feedback. Bioscience education. Retrieved from <http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/journal/vol12/beej-12-1.aspx> (on 13th February 2012).
- Black, P. J., & Wiliam, D. (1998a). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5(1), 7–74.
- Black, P. J., & Wiliam, D. (1998b). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139–148.
- Black, P. J., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2006). Developing a theory of formative assessment. In J. Gardner (Ed.), *Assessment and learning* (pp. 81–100). London: Sage.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2010). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(1), 81-90.
- Bloom, B., Hastings, J., & Madaus, G. (1971). *Handbook on the formative and summative evaluation of student learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2004). *The Functional Analysis of English* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Bone, A. (2006). The impact of formative assessment on student learning: a law-based study. Retrieved from <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/projects/past-projects/bone/> (on 13th April. 2014).
- Boston, C. (2002). The concept of formative assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 8(9), 1-5.
- Boud, D. (1995). Assessment and learning: contradictory or complimentary? 35-48 in Knight, P. (Ed.) *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*, London: Kogan Page/SEDA.
- Brookhart, S. M. (2007). Feedback That Fits. *Educational Leadership*, 65(4). 54-59.
- Brookhart, S. M. (2008). *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*. Alexandria, VA:ASCD.
- Butler, R. (1987). Task-involving and ego-involving properties of evaluation: Effects of different feedback conditions on motivational perceptions, interest, and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 79(4), 474-482.
- Canary, D. J.; & Spitzberg, B. H. (1989). A model of the perceived competence of conflict strategies. *Human Communication Research*, 15(4), p. 630-649.
- Carless, D. (2006). Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 219–233.
- Castello, E. (2008). *Text complexity and reading comprehension tests*. Bern: International Academic Publishers.
- Cody, M.J., & McLaughlin, M.L. (1985). *The situation as a construct in interpersonal communication research*. In M.L. Knapp and G.R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 263-312). Beverly Hills, California: Sage.
- Coffin, C. (2003). Exploring different dimensions of language use. *ELT Journal*, 57(1), 14-18.
- Cowie, B., & Bell, B. (1999). A model of formative assessment in science education. *Assessment in Education*, 6(1), 102–116.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4rd ed.). Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage.

- Crooks, T. (1988). The Impact of Classroom Evaluation on Students. *Review of Educational Research*, 58(4), 438-481.
- De Beaugrande, R. & Dressler, W. (1981). *Introduction to text linguistics*. London: Longman
- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how texts work*. Rozelle, N.S.W.: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Droga, L., & Humphrey, S. (2003). *Grammar and Meaning an introduction for primary teachers*. Target Texts, Australia.
- Duers, L.E., & Brown, N. (2009). An exploration of student nurses' experiences of formative assessment. *Nurse Education Today*, 29(6), 654–659.
- Duncan, N. (2007). 'Feed-forward': improving students' use of tutors' comments. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(3), 271–283.
- Dunn, K. E., & Mulvenon, S. W. (2009). A critical review of research on formative assessments: The limited scientific evidence of the impact of formative assessments in education. *Practical Assessment & Research and Evaluation*, 14(7), 1-11.
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd. ed.). London: Pinter.
- Englander, K. (2006). Revision of scientific manuscripts by non-native English-speaking scientists in response to journal editors' language critiques. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(2), 129-161.
- Gipps, C. (1994). *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment*. London: Falmer Press.
- Gipps, C. (1999). Socio-Cultural aspects of assessment. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 355 - 392.
- Gregory, M., & Carroll, S. (1978). *Language and Situation: Language Varieties and their Social Contexts*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1973): *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985a): *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.

- Halliday, M.A.K. (1989a): "Context of situation". In Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, eds., *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-14.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1989b): "Functions of language". In Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, eds., *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 15-28.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1989c): "Register variation". In Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, eds., *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 29-43.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994): *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Second Edition). London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1998). On the grammar of pain. *Functions of Language*, 5(1), 1-32.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social semiotic Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K.; McIntosh, A., & Stevens, P. (1964). *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*. (Longmans' Linguistic Library.) London: Longmans.
- Hargreaves, E. (2005). Assessment for learning? Thinking outside the (black) box. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(2), 213-224.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 81-112.
- Higgins, R., Hartley, P., & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(1), 53-64.
- Hounsell, D., McCune, V., Hounsell, J., & Litjens, J. (2008). The quality of guidance and feedback to students. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 27(1), 55-67.
- Hunston, S. (2003). Lexis, Word form and Complementation Pattern: a Corpus Study. *Functions of Language*, 10, 31-60.

Hyland K., & F. Hyland. (eds.) (2006a). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, F. (2003). Focusing on form: student engagement with teacher feedback. *System* 31(2), 217–230.

Koh, L.C. (2010). Academic staff perspectives of formative assessment in nurse education. *Nurse Education in Practice*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2009.08.007>.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2008). Feedback on assessment: students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(3), 263–275.

MacLellan, E. (2010). Assessment for learning: the differing perceptions of tutors and students. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26(4), 307–318.

Martin, J. R. 1984. “Language, Register and Genre”. In F. Christie (Ed.), *Children Writing: A Reader* (pp. 21-29). Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Martin, J. R. 1985. “Process and Text: Two Aspects of Semiosis”. In J. D. Benson and W. S. Greaves (Eds.), *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse, Vol. 1: Selected Theoretical Papers from the 9th International Systemic Workshop* (pp. 248-274). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Martin, J. R. (2001). Language, register and genre. In A. Burns & C. Coffin (Eds.), *Analysing English in a global context: A reader* (pp. 149-166). London: Routledge.

Martin, J. R. (2009). Genre and language learning: A social semiotic perspective. *Linguistics in Education*. 20, 10-21.

Martin, J. R.; & D. Rose. (2003). *Working with Discourse: Meaning beyond the Clause*. London/New York: Continuum.

Martin, J. R.; & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with Discourse* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.

Martin, J. R.; & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre Relations*. London, United Kingdom: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Martin, J.; & Rose, D. (2011). Encounters with genre: apprehending cultural frontiers. In Brett Baker, Ilana Mushin, Mark Harvey, Rod Gardner (Eds.), *Indigenous Language and Social Identity: papers in honour of Michael Walsh*, (pp. 333-346). Canberra, ACT: Pacific Linguistics.

- Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., & Painter, C. (1997). *Working with functional grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Morgan, D. L. (1998). *The focus group guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nicol, D.J.; & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 31*(2), 199–218.
- O'Donnell, M. (2002) *Systemic Coder – a text markup tool, version 4.5 users guide* (March 2002) Retrieved on 24 August 2005 from <http://www.wagsoft.com/Coder/section1.html>.
- Orrell, J. (2006). Feedback on learning achievement: rhetoric and reality. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(4), 441–456.
- Perera, J., Lee, N., Win, K., Perera, J., & Wijesuriha, L. (2008). Formative feedback to students: the mismatch between faculty perceptions and student expectations. *Medical Teacher, 30*, 395–399.
- Perumanathan, P. Sh. (2014). *Formative assessment and feedback in the primary classroom: an interplay between teachers' beliefs and practices*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Piccinin, S. (2003). *Feedback: Key to Learning*. Halifax, NS: Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.
- Poulos, A., & Mahony, M.J. (2008). Effectiveness of feedback: the students' perspective. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 33*(2), 143–154.
- Price, M., Handley, K., Millar, J., & O'Donovan, B. (2010). Feedback all that effort but what is the effect? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(3), 277-289.
- Pryor, J., & Crossouard, B. (2008). A socio-cultural theorisation of formative assessment. *Oxford Review of Education, 34*(1), 1-20.
- Sadler, D. R. (1998). Formative assessment: Revisiting the territory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 5*, 77-84.
- Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*, 535-550.

- Sadler, D.R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18, 119-144.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers (2nd edition)*. London: Sage.
- Schleppegrell, M. J. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Scriven, M. (1967). *The methodology of evaluation*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Shepard, L. A. (2008). Formative assessment: Caveat emptor. In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.), *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (pp. 279-303). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on Formative Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), 153-189.
- Silverman, D. (2010). *Doing qualitative research (3 ed.)*: Sage.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (1988). *Communicative competence: Measures of perceived effectiveness*. In C. H. Tardy (Ed.), *A handbook for the study of human communication*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Stiggins, R., & Chappuis, J. (2005). Using student-involved classroom assessment to close achievement gaps. *Theory into Practice*, 44(1), 11-18.
- Straub, R. (1997). Students' reactions to teacher comments: an exploratory study. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 31(1), 91-119.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Thompson, G. (2004). *Introducing functional grammar (2nd. Edition)*. London: Arnold.
- Weaver, M.R. (2006). Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(3), 379-394.
- Westmyer, S.A.; Dicioccio, R.L.; & Rubin, R.B. (1998). Appropriateness and effectiveness of communication channels in competent interpersonal communication. *Journal of Communication*, 48(3), p. 27-48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/joc/48.3.27>.

Wheatley, G. H. (1991). Constructivist perspectives on Science and Mathematics learning.

Science Education, 75 (1), 9-21.

Wiggins, G. (2011). Moving to modern assessments. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(7), 63.

William, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37(1), 3-14.

William, D., & Thompson, M. (2008). Integrating assessment with instruction: What will it take to make it work? In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.), *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (pp. 53–82). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Appendices

Appendix A

Examples on types of process adapted from Eggins, 2004. P. 213-4.

Diana gave some blood.	[material]
Diana thought she should give blood.	[mental]
Diana said that giving blood is easy.	[verbal]
Diana dreamt of giving blood.	[behavioural]
There is a reward for giving blood.	[existential]
Diana is a blood donor.	[relational]

Appendix B

Examples on how meaning is expressed by the use of modalization and high, median, and low spectrum adapted from (Eggins, 2004, p. 173). The meanings made through modalization can be realised in three ways:

	Low	Median	High
1.	Possibly Henry James might have written "The Bostonians".	Perhaps Henry James could have written "The Bostonians".	Certainly Henry James must have written "The Bostonians".
2.	Henry James sometimes wrote incredibly long sentences.	Henry James usually wrote incredible long sentences.	Henry James always wrote incredible long sentences.

Examples on modalization when negated.

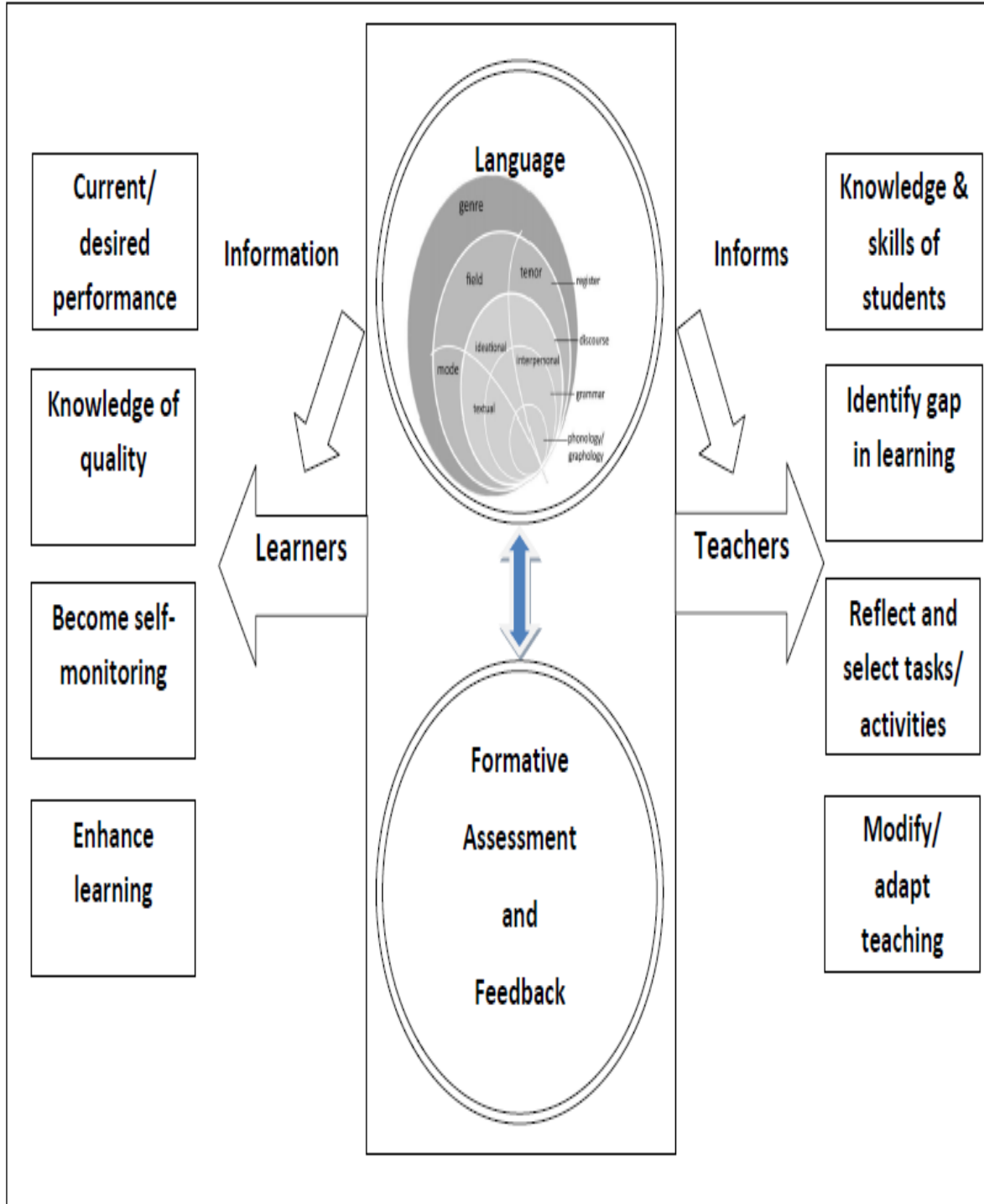
	Low	Median	High
1.	Henry James did not always write long sentences.	Henry James probably did not write "The Bostonians".	Henry James never wrote long sentences.
2.	Henry James possibly might not have written "The Bostonians".	Henry James did not usually write long sentences.	Henry James certainly did not write "The Bostonians".
			Henry James could not possibly have written "The Bostonians".

Modalization can also be expressed explicitly as follows:

	Low	Median	High
1.	I guess Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".	I suppose Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".	I'm sure Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".
2.	I reckon Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".	I think Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".	I'm certain Henry James wrote "The Bostonians".

Appendix C

Adapted from Martin and Rose (2011, p. 271) and Perumanathan (2014)



Appendix D

An example of one case for the changes done to the manuscripts of scientists to be accepted the journal editors, Englander (2006).

Table 1: Case study of Roberto

Scientist and Metafunction	Feature	Original Submission (occurrences)	Revised Submission (occurrences)	Percentage Initial:Final	Percentage Change
ROBERTO					
Ideation:					
Process	Relational	6 in 27 clauses	8 in 38 clauses	22%:21%	-1
	Material	7	18	26:47	+21
	Mental	4	5	15:13	-2
	Verbal	1	3	4:8	+4
	Existential	9	4	33:11	-22
Voice	Passive	1	13	4:34	+30
Participant	Human	1	1	4:3	-1
	Non-human	12	31	44:81	+37
Interpersonal:	Pronoun Clause Referent	6	3	22:8	-14
	Existential	8	3	30:8	-22
	Attitude Marker	9	3	31:8	-23
	Hedging	3	13	11:34	+23
	Emphatics	13	10	48:26	-22
	Commentary	4	0	15:00	-15
	Modals	4	7	15:18	+3
	Attributor Present	5	7	18:18	0
	Attributor Parenthetical	4 of 5 attributions	2 of 7 attributions	80:29	-51
	Attributor Within Clause	1 of 5 attributions	5 of 7 attributions	20:71	+51
Textual:	Marked Theme	9 of 17 sentences	10 of 28 sentences	53:36	-17
	Principal and Sole Clause	2 of 17 sentences	11 of 28 sentences	12:39	+27
	Principal but Not Sole Clause	6 of 17 sentences	7 of 28 sentences	35:25	-10

Appendix E

Recruitment text for student interview participants

Dear student,

My name is Nidhal Qwai. I am conducting a research study for a Master of Arts in Education with the University of Ottawa. The focus of my research is how the effectiveness of written feedback provided to graduate students by their professors on assignments is affected by the linguistic style of the professors, with which you- as a student- are highly involved. One primary component of my research is to conduct interviews with students as they are the receivers and decoders of written feedback. The data from these interviews may help me as an investigator to better understand from the perspective of students how linguistic style positively or negatively affects the effectiveness of written feedback. In addition, it will provide me with guidelines for developing further study at a later stage.

At this time, I would like to invite you to participate in my study. This project has received the ethics approval from the University of Ottawa. If you agree to take part in this project, you will provide me with a copy of an assignment from one of your graduate courses that has already been completed. The assignment must have at least 10 feedback points from the professor of the course included on it. You will then be interviewed about the assignment by me. The interview will be in a place and time of your convenience. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to provide a record of our conversation.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you would be free to withdraw at any time. This means that even though you agree initially to the interviews, you can withdraw

from any interview at any point, and your assignment will be returned to you. Further, you may ask questions at any time, and you may refuse to answer any of the questions without negative consequences on you.

The results of this study will be incorporated in my master's thesis. The results might also be published in an academic journal. However, yours and your professor's identity will always remain confidential as a pseudonym will be used for you, and you can delete any identifying information of your professor. I will have sole access to the data for analysis, and all data (soft and hard copies) will be kept password protected in a secure locked office of the researcher. Finally, all data will be destroyed within five years after the completion of my master's degree.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience. Please let me know if you are interested in participating within the next week so we can arrange an interview time that fits both of our schedules.

Thanks again you for considering participating in this important project.

Nidhal Qwai

Appendix F

Students' Interview protocols,

Name:

Date of interview:

Participant's pseudonym:

Time of interview:

1. Tell me please how did you feel when you first read the written comments of your professor on your assignment? Why?
2. Let's talk about your learning experience with that assignment in terms of how effective or ineffective was the feedback? Did you use the feedback to make any changes to the assignment? Did the feedback have any effect on how you completed later assignments in this course or any other course? Did it affect your learning in any way? Please explain.
3. How do you think your professor's linguistic style affected the effectiveness of his or her written feedback provided on your assignment?
4. What are the language expressions or words that you liked on your assignment? Why?
5. What are the language expressions or words that you did NOT like on your assignment? Why?
6. Imagine you are a professor and you will provide one of your students with written feedback on an assignment. What would you choose (option 'a' or 'b' for each pair) from the following list and why?
 - a. This choice has to be justified.

b. You have to justify this choice.

a. Avoid repetition of this expression.

b. I would avoid repetition of this expression!

a. You need to give most of your attention to the conceptual framework.

b. It is the conceptual framework that should take most of your attention.

a. Do you have a reference for this claim?

b. Provide a reference for this claim.

a. This word is wrong.

b. Is this the best word?

7. On a scale from one to ten where one is not important and ten is very important, how would you describe the role of a professor's linguistic style in making written feedback to students effective? Why?

8. On a scale from one to ten where one is ineffective and ten is very effective, how would you describe the linguistic style of written feedback you received on your assignment? Why?

Appendix G

Ideational meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments

Participants	James Assignment	Mary's 1st. Assignment		Mary's 2nd. Assignment		Mary's 3rd. Assignment		Mary's 4th. Assignment		Mark's Assignment		Ally's Assignment		Sarah's Assignment		Robert's Assignment		Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation		
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage					
Number of Feedback points (N)	52	35	205	15	71	140	184	19	32	753												
IDEATIONAL MEANING	material process	5	10%	3	9%	39	19%	4	27%	13	18%	25	18%	36	20%	1	5%	3	9%	129	0.17	0.07
	mental process	2	4%	2	6%	35	17%	2	13%	4	6%	24	17%	31	17%	2	11%	3	9%	105	0.14	0.053
	behavioural process	5	10%	6	17%	27	13%	3	20%	5	7%	21	15%	49	27%	3	16%	11	34%	130	0.17	0.085
	verbal process	1	2%	1	3%	15	7%	1	7%	8	11%	12	9%	10	5%	1	5%	0	0%	49	0.07	0.035
	relational process	29	56%	15	43%	70	34%	4	27%	35	49%	41	29%	36	20%	5	26%	5	16%	240	0.32	0.135
	existential process	10	19%	8	23%	19	9%	1	7%	6	8%	17	12%	22	12%	7	37%	10	31%	100	0.13	0.107
	human participants	13	25%	15	43%	119	58%	6	40%	19	27%	70	50%	91	49%	8	42%	16	50%	357	0.47	0.11
	non human participants	39	75%	20	57%	86	42%	9	60%	52	73%	70	50%	93	51%	11	58%	16	50%	396	0.53	0.11
	active voice	20	38%	25	71%	142	69%	7	47%	31	44%	112	80%	158	86%	11	58%	28	88%	534	0.71	0.186
	passive voice	3	6%	2	6%	30	15%	1	7%	11	15%	13	9%	15	8%	2	11%	3	9%	80	0.11	0.036
	phrases	29	56%	8	23%	33	16%	7	47%	29	41%	15	11%	11	6%	6	32%	1	3%	139	0.18	0.188
	nominalization	14	27%	8	23%	19	9%	2	13%	22	31%	14	10%	22	12%	7	37%	3	9%	111	0.15	0.105
	no nominalization	38	73%	27	77%	186	91%	13	87%	49	69%	126	90%	162	88%	12	63%	29	91%	642	0.85	0.105

Appendix H

Interpersonal meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments

Participants		James Assignment		Mary's 1st. Assignment		Mary's 2nd. Assignment		Mary's 3rd. Assignment		Mary's 4th. Assignment		Mark's Assignment		Ally's Assignment		Sarah's Assignment		Robert's Assignment		Total (N)		Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of Feedback points (N)		52		35		205		15		71		140		184		19		32		753			
INTERPERSONAL MEANING	declarative statements	10	19%	15	43%	68	33%	6	40%	27	38%	82	59%	136	74%	10	53%	29	91%	383	0.51	0.219	
	interrogative statements	23	44%	12	34%	90	44%	1	7%	12	17%	35	25%	30	16%	1	5%	3	9%	207	0.27	0.153	
	imperative statements	6	12%	5	14%	13	6%	1	7%	3	4%	7	5%	7	4%	2	11%	0	0%	44	0.06	0.044	
	phrases	13	25%	3	9%	34	17%	7	47%	29	41%	16	11%	11	6%	6	32%	0	0%	119	0.16	0.162	
	modality	2	4%	4	11%	64	31%	0	0%	11	15%	34	24%	43	23%	1	5%	5	16%	164	0.22	0.105	
	no modality	50	96%	31	89%	141	69%	15	100%	60	85%	106	76%	141	77%	18	95%	27	84%	589	0.78	0.105	
	yes personal pronoun	9	17%	15	43%	93	45%	5	33%	17	24%	63	45%	86	47%	9	47%	18	56%	315	0.42	0.125	
	no personal pronoun	43	83%	20	57%	112	55%	10	67%	54	76%	77	55%	98	53%	10	53%	14	44%	438	0.58	0.125	
	evaluative words	10	19%	6	17%	34	17%	0	0%	25	35%	26	19%	20	11%	13	68%	9	28%	143	0.19	0.194	
	no evaluative words	42	81%	29	83%	171	83%	15	100%	46	65%	114	81%	164	89%	6	32%	23	72%	610	0.81	0.194	

Appendix I

Textual meanings occurrences, Percentages, (N) & the Means for all assignments

Participants		James Assignment	Percentage	Mary's 1st. Assignment	Percentage	Mary's 2nd. Assignment	Percentage	Mary's 3rd. Assignment	Percentage	Mary's 4th. Assignment	Percentage	Mark's Assignment	Percentage	Ally's Assignment	Percentage	Sarah's Assignment	Percentage	Robert's Assignment	Percentage	Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of Feedback points (N)		52		35		205		15		71		140		184		19		32		753		
TEXTUAL MEANING	yes lexical density Nouns	28	54%	21	60%	163	80%	10	67%	64	90%	121	86%	130	71%	19	100%	27	84%	583	0.77	0.151
	no lexical density Nouns	24	46%	14	40%	42	20%	5	33%	7	10%	19	14%	54	29%	0	0%	5	16%	170	0.23	0.151
	yes lexical density verbs	13	25%	16	46%	160	78%	10	67%	57	80%	115	82%	140	76%	9	47%	19	59%	539	0.72	0.196
	no lexical density verbs	39	75%	19	54%	45	22%	5	33%	14	20%	25	18%	44	24%	10	53%	13	41%	214	0.28	0.196
	yes lexical density adjectives 1	15	29%	9	26%	128	62%	5	33%	57	80%	99	71%	96	52%	15	79%	12	38%	436	0.58	0.217
	no lexical density adjectives 1	37	71%	26	74%	77	38%	10	67%	14	20%	41	29%	88	48%	4	21%	20	63%	317	0.42	0.217
	yes lexical density adjectives 2	5	10%	1	3%	72	35%	3	20%	36	51%	73	52%	39	21%	6	32%	3	9%	238	0.32	0.178
	no lexical density adjectives 2	47	90%	34	97%	133	65%	12	80%	35	49%	67	48%	145	79%	13	68%	29	91%	515	0.68	0.178
	yes lexical density adverbs	7	13%	2	6%	57	28%	2	13%	26	37%	65	46%	40	22%	3	16%	4	13%	206	0.27	0.132
	no lexical density adverbs	45	87%	33	94%	148	72%	13	87%	45	63%	75	54%	144	78%	16	84%	28	88%	547	0.73	0.132
	yes grammatical intricacy	5	10%	13	37%	108	53%	6	40%	12	17%	89	64%	137	74%	2	11%	11	34%	383	0.51	0.23
	no grammatical intricacy	47	90%	22	63%	97	47%	9	60%	59	83%	51	36%	47	26%	17	89%	21	66%	370	0.49	0.23
	yes- cohesion	29	56%	21	60%	123	60%	3	20%	39	55%	77	55%	84	46%	7	37%	24	75%	407	0.54	0.157
	no-cohesion	23	44%	14	40%	82	40%	12	80%	32	45%	63	45%	100	54%	12	63%	8	25%	346	0.46	0.157
	yes textual adjuncts	7	13%	5	14%	34	17%	2	13%	12	17%	26	19%	45	24%	2	11%	7	22%	140	0.19	0.044
	no textual adjuncts	45	87%	30	86%	171	83%	13	87%	59	83%	114	81%	139	76%	17	89%	25	78%	613	0.81	0.044
	yes emphasis	3	6%	6	17%	48	23%	0	0%	15	21%	40	29%	30	16%	2	11%	7	22%	151	0.20	0.091
	no emphasis	49	94%	29	83%	157	77%	15	100%	56	79%	100	71%	154	84%	17	89%	25	78%	602	0.80	0.091

Appendix J

Lexical Density and Grammatical Intricacy Means for each Assignment in more details.

Participants		Janes Assignment	Mary's 1st. Assignment	Mary's 2nd. Assignment	Mary's 3rd. Assignment	Mary's 4th. Assignment	Mark's Assignment	Ally's Assignment	Sarah's Assignment	Robert's Assignment	Total (N)
	Number of words in each assignment (N)	366	182	1344	72	535	1067	1228	147	253	5194
TEXTUAL MEANING	yes lexical density Nouns	28	21	163	10	64	121	130	19	27	583
	yes lexical density verbs	13	16	160	10	57	115	140	9	19	539
	yes lexical density adjectives 1	15	9	128	5	57	99	96	15	12	436
	yes lexical density adjectives 2	5	1	72	3	36	73	39	6	3	238
	yes lexical density adverbs	7	2	57	2	26	65	40	3	4	206
	Lexical Density Means	19%	27%	43%	42%	45%	44%	36%	35%	26%	39%
	Grammatical intricacy	5	13	108	6	12	89	137	2	11	383
	Grammatical Intricacy Means	63%									
	Grammatical Intricacy Means	13%	41%	63%	75%	29%	72%	79%	15%	34%	60%

Appendix K

Acronym Legend

No.	Acronym	Meanings	Notes
1.	D	Difference	
2.	Id. M. 1	Ideational Meanings 1	The more these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are material process, non-human participants, passive voice, and nominalization. They are marked in yellow colour.
3.	Id. M. 2	Ideational Meanings 2	The less these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are behavioral process, relational process, and active voice. They are marked in orange colour.
4.	Int. M. 1	Interpersonal Meanings 1	The more these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are declarative statements, interrogative statements and modality. They are marked in yellow colour.
5.	Int. M. 2	Interpersonal Meanings 2	The more these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are imperative statements, personal pronouns, and evaluative words. They are marked in orange colour.
6.	LoA	Level of perceived effectiveness of feedback provided on the assignment	
7.	LoS	Level of perceived effectiveness of feedback provided on the whole sample	
8.	MA	Mean of each assignment	
9.	MS	Mean of the whole sample	
10.	SD	Standard Deviation	
11.	Text. M. 1	Textual Meanings 1	The more these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are lexical density, cohesion, textual adjuncts, and emphasis. They are marked in yellow colour.
12.	Text. M. 2	Textual Meanings 2	The more these features are used, the more effective feedback is likely to be perceived. These features are grammatical intricacy in this study. They are marked in orange colour.

Appendix L

The five emerging themes, their sub-themes, and support in literature

Themes	Sub-Themes (Categories)	Literature Support
Linguistic style is part of feedback	Students' preferred way of saying things	Hyland (2003); Halliday (1986)
	Linguistic style and feedback	Englander (2006); Hyland (2003)
	Professor's linguistic style	N/A
Students require Effective Feedback	Feedback Justifications	Carless (2006)
	Feedback Appreciation	Black & Wiliam (2006); Shute (2008); Wiliam (2011)
	Action on Feedback	Shute (2008)
	Feedback Effect on Students	Brookhart (2008); Hyland (2003)
	Feedback Effectiveness	Sadler (2010), Black & Wiliam (1998)
Providing feedback looks easy	Student's Feelings	Brookhart (2007)
	Feedback Sensitivity	Black & Wiliam (2009)
	Feedback Interpretations	Hyland (2003)
	Professor's Linguistic Style on my Assignment	N/A
Ineffective Feedback should be corrected	Feedback Format	Piccinin (2003)
	Feedback Ineffectiveness	Carless (2006); Bailey & Garner (2010)
	Actions on Feedback Ineffectiveness	Piccinin (2003)
	Feedback Strategies	Brookhart (2007)
	Ineffective Feedback Consequences	Bailey & Garner (2010); Carless (2006)
	Feedback Contradictions	N/A
	Workshops on How to Provide Feedback	Piccinin (2003)
Feedback is a Shared Responsibility	Feedback Goal	Black & Wiliam (2006); Shute (2008); Sadler (2010)
	Professor's position	Hyland (2003), Brookhart (2008)
	Student's Role on the Feedback Provided	Hyland (2003); Hyland and Hyland (2006).

Appendix M

Assignment Mean (MA), Sample Mean (MS), Difference (D) of the ideational meanings for every assignment.

	Jane's Assignment			Mary's 1st. Assignment			Mary's 2nd. Assignment			Mary's 3rd. Assignment			Mary's 4th. Assignment			Mark's Assignment			Ally's Assignment			Sarah's Assignment			Robert's Assignment					
	MA	MS	D	s 1st.	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D			
Id. M. 1	29%	21%	8%	35%	21%	13%	21%	21%	0%	24%	21%	2%	27%	21%	6%	22%	21%	1%	23%	21%	1%	28%	21%	7%	20%	21%	-2%			
Id. M. 2	35%	66%	-31%	33%	40%	-7%	39%	40%	-1%	44%	40%	4%	31%	40%	-9%	41%	40%	1%	44%	40%	4%	33%	40%	-7%	46%	40%	6%			
	ID. M. 1 = Ideational Meanings 1						ID. M. 2 = Ideational Meanings 2						MA = Mean for each assignment						MS = Mean for the whole Sample						D = Difference					

Appendix N

Assignment Mean (MA), Sample Mean (MS), Difference (D) of the interpersonal meanings for every assignment.

	Jane's Assignment			Mary's 1st. Assignment			Mary's 2nd. Assignment			Mary's 3rd. Assignment			Mary's 4th. Assignment			Mark's Assignment			Ally's Assignment			Sarah's Assignment			Robert's Assignment					
	MA	MS	D	s 1st.	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D			
Int. M. 1	22%	33%	-11%	23%	33%	-10%	36%	33%	3%	30%	33%	-4%	16%	33%	-18%	36%	33%	3%	38%	33%	4%	21%	33%	-12%	39%	33%	5%			
Int. M. 2	16%	22%	-6%	21%	22%	-1%	23%	22%	1%	25%	22%	3%	13%	22%	-9%	23%	22%	1%	20%	22%	-2%	42%	22%	20%	28%	22%	6%			
	Int. M. 1 = Interpersonal Meanings 1						Int. M. 2 = Interpersonal Meanings 2						MA = Mean for each assignment						MS = Mean for the whole Sample						D = Difference					

Appendix O

Assignment Mean (MA), Sample Mean (MS), Difference (D) of the Textual meanings for every assignment

	Jane's Assignment			Mary's 1st. Assignment			Mary's 2nd. Assignment			Mary's 3rd. Assignment			Mary's 4th. Assignment			Mark's Assignment			Ally's Assignment			Sarah's Assignment			Robert's Assignment					
	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D	MA	MS	D			
Text. M. 1	23%	33%	-9%	34%	33%	2%	36%	33%	3%	30%	33%	-3%	19%	33%	-14%	37%	33%	4%	31%	33%	-2%	23%	33%	-10%	36%	33%	3%			
Text. M. 2	13%	60%	-48%	29%	60%	-32%	63%	60%	3%	41%	60%	-20%	75%	60%	15%	72%	60%	11%	79%	60%	19%	15%	60%	-45%	34%	60%	-26%			
	Text. M. 1 = Textual Meanings 1						Text. M. 2 = Textual Meanings 2						MA = Mean for each assignment						MS = Mean for the whole Sample						D = Difference					