AM I PROMOTING FEEDBACK CYCLE AND SOCIOMATERIAL LEARNING? INSIGHTS FROM PRACTITIONER INQUIRY ON WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN FINAL DRAFTS

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ABSTRACT

This study employed practitioner inquiry to determine whether feedback cycle and socio-material learning was promoted through the provision of written corrective feedback (WCF). The context of study was the final draft submitted in an academic writing course for arts and social science students. The practitioner inquiry was shaped by mixed methods, through the quantitative (categorisation) and qualitative (analytical) examination of WCF. The categorisation of WCF was guided by a feedback typology and the extent of learning opportunities. A total of 309 instances of WCF were found across 55 final drafts. Indirect and metalinguistic feedback on *Content* and *Language* was frequent. Furthermore, most of the WCF was restricted to the final essay, with minimal expansive opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond this writing course. In the subsequent analysis of the WCF, this study concluded that feedback was provided for the purpose of keeping track of work done. To really promote a feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning, writing instructors should consider improving students' feedback literacy skills.

Keywords: Written corrective feedback; practitioner inquiry; feedback cycle; sociomaterial learning

Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has been an area of research interest since Truscott's (1996) controversial claims. Since then, many researchers and practitioners have sought to understand the impact of feedback given to written assignments. These studies aim to position WCF as valuable for the development of students' writing skills and language proficiency (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Wei & Cao, 2020). Studies have also described actual feedback practices, from which a typology of WCF has been proposed (Ellis, 2009) and their effectiveness in different situations has been analysed. For instance, in a recent study by Loo (2020), international graduate students were found to respond best to metalinguistic and indirect feedback. The former is feedback that explains probable reasons of errors while the latter identifies errors without providing correction. In another recent study, Tan and Manochphinyo (2017) reported that the interaction between different variables, such as type of feedback, time of feedback, and writing issues, has a bearing on students' writing improvement. Specifically, they found that indirect feedback was more learner-centred and useful for improving writing accuracy.

Most of these studies, however, focused on WCF provided in between drafts. To date, studies that examined WCF given to a final written draft remain scarce. In one known study by Carless (2006), WCF was found to serve as reminders for what students had to do to improve their writing beyond the course. This, according to Carless and Boud (2018), encourages a feedback cycle where students are able to self-evaluate and enact strategies for writing improvement. Feedback provided at the end of a course, in a final written assignment, also has the potential of enabling a sociomaterial approach to learning, where student-writers are empowered to take agentic actions to source feedback from their environment to hone their writing skills in other courses or professional contexts (Gravett, 2020). Considering these learning possibilities, this study aims to examine WCF given in a written submission at the end of a course. Specifically, this study employs practitioner inquiry, or self-study, to draw insights about the purpose and expectations of WCF given at a particular juncture in a university academic writing course.

Feedback Cycle in Academic Writing

Feedback cycle can be defined as a process where students engage with feedback provided to them by their writing instructors to make revisions on a written task. Furthermore, feedback cycle assumes that this process is iterative, leading to students eventually achieving self-regulation and self-evaluation (Evans et al., 2010). A feedback cycle is not restricted to students' engagement with their instructors; they can also be supported by peer feedback or feedback literacies activities (e.g., analysing feedback exemplars). When working with peers or considering examples of feedback with corresponding revisions, students may improve their feedback literacy skills, leading to a higher possibility of feedback uptake. This also indicates that when students become familiar with the feedback process, and are able to

produce accurate revision, they are more likely to revise better in future written tasks. Furthermore, when students are able to manage feedback given to their work, they would have developed capacities in self-evaluation, and as a result, reduce their reliance on explicit guidance or instruction by their writing instructor (Carless & Boud, 2018).

To facilitate feedback cycle, writing instructors need to ensure that feedback is manageable to them and to their students. For instructors, this may include explicit instruction that develop students' feedback literacy skills (Han & Xu, 2019; Sutton, 2012). There should be opportunities for instructors to interact with their students about the feedback they received. This interaction could be the precursor to forging a partnership, which can be supportive of a social constructivist approach for the co-construction of knowledge and understanding. Carless (2020) suggested that instructors could work with students on preferred feedback types, modes, and timing; encouraging students to seek clarification for feedback they perceive as important and valuable; being aware of the affective effects of feedback; and maximising the potentiality of feedback. For students, on the other hand, it may involve interrogating feedback beyond the scope where it is provided. Having students engage with feedback in such a manner might expand improvement in other written tasks (Evans et al., 2010). Interrogating feedback with the instructor is crucial, as students may lack knowledge or skills to interpret feedback. Hence, instructors should acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all feedback. In other words, instructors need to understand that feedback practices can be shaped, and should be shaped, by the issues it is addressing (Zheng & Yu, 2018). By ensuring manageable feedback, instructors create an environment for students to interact openly, in terms of their affect, cognition, and behaviour (Chong, 2020).

Breaking Away from the Cycle: Sociomaterial Learning

Ideally, students would be able to grow from feedback given to them, and break away from the cycle of dependence they may have on their instructors. To encourage this, a sociomaterial approach to learning should be fostered. This approach recognises that the space for learning can be vast, and need not be confined to interactions with instructors or with material objects found in the physical learning parameters. Furthermore, as proposed by Gravett (2020), we should cease considering learning spaces as neutral; instead, spaces can have an "active, and agentive, role within learning interactions" (p. 6). Besides expanding the notion of space to be inclusive of other potential sources that support learning, a sociomaterial approach also recognises that social entities found within a learning environment are interrelated in a complex manner; instead of a linear and hierarchical relationship where there is a clear demarcation between teacher and student, or a freshman and a senior student, relationships will be "messy lived experiences" that are "beyond a binary, dialogic, tutor-student interaction" (Gravett, 2020, p. 8). Adopting this approach, then, will offer the possibility of empowering students to enact agency in responding to feedback, and even sourcing feedback from other materials or entities. This, of course, can be made possible by helping students develop feedback literacy (Molloy et al., 2020).

While ideal, feedback that has the potential to empower students to look for learning opportunities beyond their conventional writing courses may be exhausting, as feedback providers need to think of feedback approaches that would suit the different preferences of students (Gravett & Winstone, 2019). Furthermore, the feedback process can be emotionally and cognitively taxing for both the feedback provider and the students. This is because feedback is not only a learning experience involving an instructor and his or her students, it also involves other entities or materials, such as administrators or the larger learning culture (Gravett & Winstone, 2019). This may be linked to instances of instructors being held accountable by how they provided feedback either by administrators who have a preconceived idea of how feedback should be deployed, or students who expect a type of response on their writing (Okuda, 2020). Writing instructors may also find themselves in unfamiliar disciplinary territories (Willey & Tanimoto, 2013. This is further complicated by higher education evolving into a transactional site, where the quality of learning is determined by measured accountability and performance of academic staff and the satisfaction of students – standards may not necessarily be the most relevant or supportive of student's learning (Zukas & Malcolm, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine WCF given to a final draft of a writing assignment. This study uses practitioner inquiry to draw insights about the purpose of WCF, with an interest on the potentiality of a feedback cycle being established and the possibility of a sociomaterial outcome being achieved. Having discussed the notions of feedback cycle and sociomaterial learning approach, this section explicates other issues pertinent to WCF provision, along with the research context and methodology.

Literature Review

WCF: Conflicts and Types

While there has been ample research detailing the practice of feedback provision, a brief overview of known conflicts affecting WCF provision and WCF types will be provided, as means to situate this study within the broader research area.   So far, research on WCF has shown that there lies a conflict in feedback beliefs and provision. Several studies, such as that by Lee (2009) and Montgomery and Baker (2007), have discussed these conflicts. Some conflicts are: instructors providing more feedback on language form, even though they believe that good writing is not solely dependent on language accuracy; instructors providing only selective feedback, even though they claim to mark comprehensively; instructors using distinct error codes, even when they know students do not interpret them correctly; instructors focusing primarily on students' weaknesses in writing, even though they know this is detrimental to students' writing development; and, instructors relying on single-draft assignments, even though they believe that students can only improve when doing multiple drafts. The reasons for these conflicts may be varied,

such as instructors' lack of experience or lack of training in teacher education or preparatory programmes (Junqueira & Payant, 2015); lack of understanding of students' backgrounds and capabilities (Ferris, 2014; Ferris et al., 2011). At a broader level, there is also a persistent tension with regards to the responsibility of providing feedback. This is apparent in other non-language courses or subject areas, where writing tasks are developed or evaluated based solely on content and not the writing processes (Chang, 2014).

Even though there are conflicts in WCF, there has been a consensus over the types of WCF. We could consider some of the common types based on the typology proposed by Ellis (2009), which are direct and indirect feedback, metalinguistic feedback, and focused and unfocused feedback. Brief remarks about the long-term impact of these WCF types on students' writing are also included (Table 1).

Table 1
WCF Types, Definitions, and Reported Long-term Impact

WCF Type	Definition	Long-term Impact Reported in Studies
Direct	Feedback that indicates an error and provides the correction	Improved accuracy of article usage after a two-month period; given with metalinguistic feedback (Bitchener, 2008)
Indirect	Feedback that indicates an error, without providing any correction	Reduction of all errors across two drafts; given with metalinguistic feedback (Loo, 2020)
Metalinguistic	Use of codes or explanation that provides a description of an error	Improved accuracy in the use of articles in an immediate writing assignment; but positive effects tapers off after some time (Shintani & Ellis, 2013)
Focused	Feedback provided to select and specific errors	Improved use of articles in second post-test (Ellis et al., 2008)
Unfocused	Feedback provided to all and any errors	

Based on the reports from other studies on the long-term impact of these types of WCF, we could see generally positive outcomes. Nonetheless, as reported by Shintani and Ellis (2003), the effects of metalinguistic feedback may not transfer to a new writing assignment after some period of time. This may be assumed of other feedback types as well, especially since there is minimal or no longitudinal evidence. Furthermore, these studies examined WCF that was given in between drafts, and not after a paper had been revised and finalised. This may lead to the deduction that maintaining a feedback cycle or promoting sociomaterial learning was not considered. This could be due to WCF practices being shaped by the immediate needs of the students in a particular course, or as discussed earlier, the expectations placed upon instructors either by students or administrators.

Practitioner Inquiry

Recognising the possibility of expanding students' learning space, WCF given even in a finalised written assignment should be deemed valuable. To examine ways to maintain a feedback cycle and promote sociomaterial learning, this study employs practitioner inquiry. This allows the evaluation of a course or a pedagogical practice for the purpose of identifying areas for improvement (Huang, 2018). When engaging in a practitioner approach, one could become cognisant of and examine the parameters and hierarchical structures that affect pedagogical beliefs and teaching practices. As such, through the practitioner approach, one could reckon with these constraints which may have pre-ordained pedagogical beliefs for instructors, many of which could have been initially invisible (Casey, 2012).

Furthermore, engaging in practitioner inquiry may be valuable as it provides an emic view of a teaching or learning setting. This inquiry, which is a form of "insider action research", is considered "a vital ingredient in sustainable educational innovation" (Casey, 2012, p. 231). In examining WCF, this may be crucial, as it has been studied predominantly through surveys, interviews, and the examination of teachers' reported and actual practices, most of which were done by researchers removed from the actual teaching (Ferris, 2014; Ferris et al., 2011; Lee, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Only in recent times have qualitative methods been employed, where reflections were used to determine perception and engagement towards WFC; nonetheless, these studies still maintained an etic perspective where external researchers were shaping the research inquiry (Gravett & Winstone, 2019). Given the circumstances surrounding the research of WCF, it then becomes crucial for instructors keen on enacting scholarly improvements on their pedagogical practice employ self-examination that may spur change. According to Orland-Barak (2009), practitioner inquiry is suitable as a catalyst of change, as it allows educators to embark on a scholarly critique to authentically situate themselves, their beliefs, and practices within their immediate setting. Orland-Barak (2009) further argues that practitioner inquiry is even more relevant today, given the increasingly marketised higher education scene marked by systems demanding accountability, all of which may push aside relevant and distinct classroom processes.

Study Context

Practitioner-Researcher

The study context is a first-year academic writing course offered to students majoring in arts and social sciences. One of the aims of this writing course was to help students have an understanding of the process of academic writing in terms of language use and content development. In this course, students wrote an academic essay on a topic selected from seven content packages (history, sociolinguistics, crime and deviance, capital punishment, justice and sexual-orientation, supernaturalism, and literature). The essay was completed over three phases; the first phase was a proposal, the second a partial literature review, and the final phase was the completed academic essay. In all these phases, WCF was provided. In

between the first and second phases, and the second and third phases, students met with the researcher for face-to-face conferencing, during which students could clarify WCF or seek further suggestions to develop their essays. Besides these individual conferencing, students had weekly tutorials, which covered academic writing features commonly employed in the broader field of arts and social sciences at the university level. The researcher of this study (henceforth, practitioner-researcher), who was examining his WCF practices through practitioner inquiry, taught this course over one academic year (two semesters).

The researcher of this study holds the belief that students should be given sufficient opportunities to act on feedback independently. This belief reflects the nature of academic writing at the university, where writing, for the most part, is an endeavour where student-authors need to rely on self or peers in making improvements of a written text. This belief can be seen in some of the practitioner-researcher's past publications (Chen et al., 2016; Loo, 2015, 2020). Furthermore, the practitioner-researcher also believes that students who are empowered to regulate and evaluate their own writing are more responsive to raising their language awareness. As a writer, having language awareness supports metalanguage, which allows students to consider various discourse features to achieve the intended meaning of their written text (Jou, 2019). These beliefs are translated to his WCF practices through the use of unfocused feedback, as he believes that students at this educational level are able to cope with feedback aimed at a variety of language and writing issues. This was also a reason for him to employ indirect feedback. Nonetheless, the practitioner-researcher was also aware that there were students whose writing skills were developing; hence, direct and metalinguistic feedback was employed as well. These feedback types, as explained earlier, provide either the correction or an explanation for an error or for a correction.

While the practitioner-researcher has personal beliefs regarding WCF, he also had to align his pedagogical practices according to the requirements of the course. In particular, his provision of WCF was shaped by the rubrics of the course. Being an academic writing course for freshman university students, the rubrics' main evaluation criteria were on Content, Organisation, and Language, which carried the heaviest weightage, given that this was an academic writing course. Specifically, Content was evaluated based on accurate understanding and use of relevant sources; Organisation was evaluated based on the coherence of the essay and logical development of the Content; and Language was evaluated based on the use of accurate and appropriate of written discourse. The drafts written in the three phases were all graded and moderated, that is, a comparison of marks given to common scripts as a way to verify that all instructors understood the rubrics in a somewhat similar manner. All of the drafts, including the final submission, were uploaded on an online learning management system (LMS). It was also here where the practitioner-researcher's WCF was provided.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

There are no specific methodologies for engaging in practitioner inquiry; instead, practitioner inquiry can consist of a variety of methodologies, all of which work together towards an "overriding paradigm for change" (Orland-Barak, 2009, p. 118). Since the aim of this study was to describe WCF given to a final written assignment, and more importantly, to determine whether WCF practices were supportive of a feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning, a methodology deemed suitable was mixed-methods, through means of categorisation and analysis of WCF. The data collection and analytical process were adapted from Kumar and Stracke (2007), which is also a practitioner inquiry where they examined their own feedback practices. In their study of WCF given in doctoral theses, Kumar and Stracke (2007) categorised the feedback quantitatively in order to offer a descriptive overview. Subsequently, they reflected by comparing the quantitative findings with the content of their feedback.

Similarly, in this study, WCF given in the final written assignment was first categorised to establish a descriptive overview, before examining whether feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning was promoted. The data consisted of WCF given to 55 students' final academic essays. Since all of the written assignments in this course were graded on the LMS, all of the feedback was typed in comment bubbles within students' submitted essays. This facilitated the collection of WCF. The WCF was categorised according to feedback types proposed by Ellis (2009), and error types in terms of Content, Organisation, and Language, as determined by the rubrics of this course. The final categorisation step was to determine the extent of WCF – whether isolated to the final essay, or had the expansive potential for promoting feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning. WCF that was isolated to the final essay addressed a particular error that resulted in penalty, while expansive WCF was identified by its resourcefulness to students' development of academic writing skills, critical thinking, or their knowledge about the topic addressed in their final essay.

Results and Discussion

WCF Types and Error Types

A total of 309 unique WCF was accounted for across 55 essays. The categories are presented in Table 2 and some examples in Table 3. Generally speaking, WCF provided by the practitioner-researcher was unfocused. Even though unfocused, WCF types could be discerned based on the provision of corrections or explanation (direct, indirect, or metalinguistic feedback). While most of the WCF was indirect (Content = 25.6%; Language = 24.3%), which would normally require students to come up with corrections, this process may have remained restricted to the final essay, since there was no further revision required. Hence, no expansive opportunities may be found beyond the final essay. Metalinguistic feedback for content was also quite frequent (15.2%). Most of this was targeted to Content, with a feedback total of 135 (43.6%), followed closely by Language, with a total of 133 (43%). Metalinguistic feedback may suggest that students were expected to think

about their errors and to come up with revisions. Nonetheless, these expectations may also be confined to the students' final essays, especially when the total percentage of expansive WCF was only 19.4%.

Table 2

WCF Types, Error Types, and Extent

Component	Content		Organisation		Language		Format	
Type	IS	EX	IS	EX	IS	EX	IS	EX
Direct	9	0	5	0	41	8	4	4
	(2.9%)		(1.6%)		(13.3%)	(2.6%)	(1.3%)	(1.3%)
Indirect	64	15	6	1	64	11	1	6
	(20.7%)	(4.9%)	(1.9%)	(0.3%)	(20.7%)	(3.6%)	(0.3%)	(1.9%)
Metalinguistic	44	3 (1%)	8	2	3 (1%)	6	0	4
	(14.2%)		(2.6%)	(0.6%)		(1.9%)		(1.3%)

Notes: IS = isolated; EX = expansive

Table 3
Examples of WCF Given in Final Essays

	Content	Organisation	Language	Format
Direct	*Isolated* ▪ You mentioned something similar in the previous paragraph - why is this being brought up again? ▪ Okay, no where in this paragraph can I see any examples that represent public order.	*Isolated* ▪ The point of argument becomes very clear at the end of the essay - but it was a little fuzzy in the beginning. Nonetheless, it is a well written piece.	*Isolated* ▪ You could instead say something - while these groups are crucial in promoting ...., an equally significant variable that needs to be taken into account is mass media, which many scholars have not examined. ▪ Decreased *Expansive* ▪ Capital is not needed. ▪ Hint is a weak verb.	*Isolated* ▪ p. ▪ & *Expansive* ▪ it is supposed to be p. 40. ▪ page number needs to be provided.

Indirect

Isolated
- More can be said about the discrepancy between policies that support economic growth but not necessarily maintain or improve social cohesiveness.
- How is morality linked with pragmatism?

Expansive
- Some sources to support what you have observed will be great.
- Is it because people are more spiritual because they have lost hope/trust in religions?

Isolated
- Why is this not written together when it was introduced previously?
- This section should be split into two (or more) paragraphs.

Expansive
- This big paragraph could have been divided into a few separate ones.

Isolated
- Missing relative pronoun
- There needs to be a conjunction in between these sentences.

Expansive
- Why does this need to be in capital letter?
- Diversify your word choice.
- Please do not use contractions in academic writing.

Isolated
- Was this a summary presented by Goode, since there are quotations marks marking this statement?

Expansive
- In-text citation does not comply with APA format.
- Format is not correct.

Metalinguistic

Isolated
- Having seen the way in which your argument is presented - there is actually good grounds for you to link examples of how religion is closely used by the State to shape legislation and society - in theoretical terms - this can be extended towards the relevance of syncretism - where there is a dominant religion (or a form of it) that persists because of the endorsement by the State.
- While there are phrases that say Singapore is different than other parts of Asia - this remains vague.

Isolated
- The presentation of the argument from the very beginning positions this essay to one that is descriptive - where you are only presenting one side (regardless of the relevant controversies).
- While the elements of an argument are presented, this essay reads like a speech.

Expansive
- It is important that your essay returns to what you had established earlier - social interactionist approach to understanding deviant acts.
- This is a proper way of formatting this

Isolated
- Better to refer to the Rohingya as your closest noun that was mentioned is the British - might be confusing
- This is saying a lot without saying much. I can see how this statement aims to summarise what has been said earlier, but the previous statement has actually done that nicely.

Expansive
- The placement of an adverb needs to be done carefully so as to not render the sentence as dependent (and incomplete).
- You should write "the" religion here, instead of referring it with "it" since the closest noun is country.

Expansive
- If author is identified anywhere in the statement, only other information needs to be provided. In this case, only the year and the page number.
- if you have direct quotations, you'll need to include the page numbers.

Expansive
- I don't think it's a facade - it probably is an achievement that should not be generalised to other parts of the world
- I see that there is one in-text citation in this paragraph - is there more which you can use to support your point?

As seen in Table 2, there is a new error component, which is Format. In the course rubrics, Format was part of all of the other three components. Nonetheless, the practitioner-researcher decided to include it as a discrete item since the WCF did not necessarily align with the three existing components. Furthermore, Format has been considered an integral aspect of academic writing, as it illustrates the knowledge of writers regarding the writing expectations and rhetorical conventions of a disciplinary community (Yu, 2020). Moreover, students' ability to conform to conventions is also an indication of a deep engagement with their readers (Driscoll et al., 2020).

As indicated in Table 2, indirect feedback for Content appeared frequently. Further categorisation found that most of the indirect feedback was isolated, with only some being expansive. Isolated indirect may reflect what the practitioner-researcher had hoped for students to do. For instance, in Table 3, an isolated indirect feedback on content – "How is morality linked with pragmatism?" – indicated the perception of a gap found in content development, where concepts discussed by the student-writer were not well-linked. Expansive indirect feedback, on the other hand, saw recommendations or questions that would hopefully spur students to examine their topic deeper. This could be observed through requests for more sources, or questions that could lead to broader conclusions (as means to come to an overview of the area examined) (Ng & Ishak, 2018). While these comments could be interpreted as pointing to gaps in the essays, they actually did not result in any deduction of points. This was most obvious in WCF that had praise or a positive evaluation (e.g., "Some sources to support what you have observed will be great").

For WCF on Content, isolated metalinguistic feedback was also more frequent than direct feedback (n=44; 14.2%). Similar to isolated indirect feedback, the purpose was to provide grounds for parts in the essay that resulted in the deduction of points. As seen in an example in Table 3, "Having seen the way in which your argument is presented - there is actually good grounds for you to link examples of how religion is closely used by the State to shape legislation and society …", the practitioner-researcher explained what the student-writer could have done to develop his or her essay meaningfully. In terms of expansive metalinguistic feedback, the practitioner-researcher pointed out parts in the essay where more sources could be used as support. While this may necessitate some penalty, there was none given, especially since the students did fulfil the course requirement of providing (at least) one source as support. Furthermore, since this was a freshman-level academic writing course, and students were mostly new to the topics they were writing on, it would not seem fair to deduct points.

Another error type which received frequent feedback was Language. As reported in Table 2, there were many instances of direct feedback on grammar, in both isolated and expansive manners. For isolated direct feedback on grammar (n=41; 13.3%), the practitioner-researcher provided either corrections to indicate the presence of errors, or alternate ways of expressing a thought (see Table 3). Direct feedback was probably given as it was the final essay and there would not be any revision work done later. As such, for practicality reasons, the practitioner-researcher thought it would be best for corrections to be given directly (Black &

Nanni, 2016; Lee, 2019). However, not all the WCF for feedback was direct, as seen in the frequent instances of indirect feedback. Most of the indirect feedback was isolated (n=64; 20.7%). The purpose of this was also to justify point deduction. On the contrary, the expansive direct and indirect feedback for grammar sought to provide alternatives or recommendations for future academic writing tasks (e.g., "Diversify your word choice; Please do not use contractions in academic writing"). The provision of metalinguistic feedback, on the other hand, was scarce. As seen in the examples in Table 3, metalinguistic feedback sought to provide explanation for errors, which the practitioner-researcher thought was not necessary, given that the students were highly proficient users of English, who speak English as their dominant language (Bolton et al., 2017).

In general, instances of expansive feedback for Content and Language were provided through indirect or metalinguistic feedback, instead of direct feedback. A reason for this could be that providing expansive direct feedback for Content and Language would require the practitioner-researcher to explicitly outline to student further readings or understanding (for content development) and possible organisational patterns for future academic texts. This may not be necessary, given that the topics students chose may not be areas of study or interest, and that there will be more writing assignments in future courses with other organisational genres. In the final essays, the practitioner-researcher also refrained from providing isolated metalinguistic feedback on Format. This could probably be due to the deduction of points as a result of errors; hence, at best, the students could be reminded of what the correct format would be, with the possibility of increasing their awareness towards expected conventions so as to avoid mistakes in future writing tasks. As seen in Table 3, the examples of expansive metalinguistic feedback were related to in-text citation styles, which were given in the form of an instruction.

Was Feedback Cycle or Sociomaterial Learning Promoted?

This study sought to determine whether WCF feedback given to a final essay written by freshman university students promoted a feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning. In this study, feedback was predominantly isolated, with some instances of expansive opportunities for learning. From these findings, we can probably gauge the reasons for the provision of numerous isolated WCF. First, it may be due to the practitioner-researcher's keeping track of issues encountered while marking the essay. This may be for personal reference, especially if an essay had to be revisited to ensure fair and transparent evaluation. Second, indicating the issues may also constitute evidence for higher management to keep track of the practitioner-researcher's pedagogical practices, especially when there is a need to establish that evaluation was done in line with official criteria, such as the rubrics for the course. Conversely, the practitioner-researcher could always use WCF given to students' essays to indicate that teaching was actually carried out. These reasons are indicative of the performativity that one needs to enact, in order to convince stakeholders, including students, that work is actually being done (Orland-Barak, 2005; Zukas & Malcolm, 2019). Although such performativity may ensure the stability of the practitioner-researcher's position and provide evidence for

accountability (Wei & Cao, 2020), it may not necessarily lead to students' extensive learning or even the practitioner-researcher's professional development. Another reason may be that students' interest is only in their grades, and perhaps feedback would only be referred to if there was doubt in the grades awarded (Lee, 2019). This reason reflects the terminal nature of WCF given in final essays, which should not be the case. As Gourlay (2017) posited, student engagement with learning opportunities should be simplistic and transactional; instead it should be engaging, "through a constantly shifting network of actors — the student, the class, the teacher, the institution, the lecture theatre, the laptop, the notepad" (p. 32).

Pedagogical and Research Implications

From this study, there are some pedagogical and research implications worth considering. First, as seen in this study, direct feedback presented as expansive can be quite similar to metalinguistic feedback. Hence, taking an expansive approach could transform the function of particular pedagogical practices, and possibly reduce practices that may be overly simplistic (i.e. direct feedback as the immediate provision of correction). Second, expansive feedback emphasises what students could learn, whereas isolated feedback indicates (to both students and instructors) what were considered concerns. While encouraging students to learn beyond the scope of a course is admirable, being transparent with evaluation processes is also necessary, which may also be what students are more keen to know (Lee, 2019). As such, the instructor needs a compromise aligned with the personal beliefs of feedback practices and the expectations of the institution and of the students, and consider the urgency of introducing lessons on feedback literacy (Sutton, 2012). Third, from a research perspective, this paper has demonstrated how self-study can be useful in not only identifying pedagogical practices, but bring to the forefront caveats worth exploring. This paper also promotes the value of taking an ontologic–epistemological stance, an integral component of practitioner inquiry or action research, that prompts educators to take on a scholarly or empirical critique of their pedagogical practices or epistemologies which can be powerful enough to compel educational transformations even at the policy level (Gibbs et al., 2017).

Conclusion

While insightful, this study is based solely on the perception of the practitioner-researcher. To really gauge whether feedback cycle or sociomaterial learning was enacted, future studies should include student perception and utilise an ethnographic approach, where various written output can be examined to determine the extent of WCF application and the manageability of WCF. This will also offer more evidence to delineate feedback cycle from sociomaterial learning. Nevertheless, this study acknowledged that writing instructors, whether working with university students in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context, can leave a positive impact on students' higher education experience, and be more than just a convenience editor, as cautioned by Willey and Tanimoto (2013). Furthermore, through the examination of feedback

practices, there was an engagement between theory and practice, leading to avenues of self-critique of belief and practice (Orland-Barak, 2005). This seeks to unpack reasons for actions, and even accept tensions or ambiguity for matters beyond his or her control, all of which are crucial variables for changes in pedagogical practices. For the practitioner-researcher, there is a good case for feedback literacy to be emphasised.

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