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How do they perceive it?!

A qualitative case study of the impact of English written feedback on students' perception in the Norwegian classroom

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The path was full of obstacles, but I could succeed in crossing with you along.

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Summary

Despite high interest in second language writers' written feedback process, few studies have explored how learners perceive feedback to develop and encourage their writing, especially at the high school level. Therefore, this thesis seeks to investigate how foreign English language students perceive English written feedback. A qualitative case study was implemented to capture the students' perspectives of the different functionalities of written feedback and make us aware of the various factors that can influence this process.

Twenty-four participants were surveyed using open-ended questions followed by group interview with five participants to investigate in-depth the meaning of valuable written feedback. The setting is a Norwegian 11th-grade upper-secondary classroom in the middle of Norway, (VG1) general studies (*studiespesialisering*). The collected data from both methods were analyzed jointly to find cross interests and findings. Thematic analysis suggested that the participants have valued three functionalities of the written feedback. The three-valued factors are understandable, balanced, and constructive feedback to create a meaningful input for the students to develop and encourage their efforts for writing. However, in light of other studies, this study tries to provide a deeper understanding of giving and perceiving written feedback. The roles of contextuality, teachers' background and beliefs, and students' background and level of proficiencies might influence the feedback process. Even though there is general agreement on the effective written feedback according to the results of this study, the other factors can affect the individual perceptions.

This thesis suggests a general insight into the purposefully written feedback that can raise the teachers' overall awareness of how to construct systematic interferences to enhance the students' writing skills and encourage them to revise and continue writing. Furthermore, teachers' feedback practices can hold an account for the individual differences in perceiving written feedback.

In general, the study has demonstrated how meaningful written feedback should strive to develop and motivate students' writing and illuminates the contextual role, in addition to the students' and teachers' background and beliefs factors in influencing this process.

Sammendrag

Til tross for stor interesse når det gjelder den skriftlige tilbakemeldingsprosessen for elever som skriver på andrespråk, er det få studier som har undersøkt hvordan elever oppfatter tilbakemeldinger for å utvikle og oppmuntre skriveprosessen deres. Hensikten med denne oppgaven er derfor å undersøke hvordan elever som lærer engelsk, forstår engelsk. En kvalitativ case-studie ble brukt for å fange opp studentenes synspunkter med tanke på de forskjellige funksjonalitetene bak skriftlige tilbakemeldinger, og for å gjøre oss oppmerksomme på de ulike faktorene som kan påvirke denne prosessen.

Tjuefire deltakere ble spurt ut ved bruk av åpne spørsmål, etterfulgt av gruppeintervju med fem deltakere for å gå i dybden på hva verdifull skriftlig tilbakemelding vil si. Stedet er et norsk klasserom på en videregående skole midt i Norge, og trinnet er VG1, studiespesialisering. De samlede dataene fra begge metodene ble analysert sammen for å finne interesser og funn som krysser hverandre. Tematisk analyse viste at deltakerne vektla tre funksjonaliteter av skriftlig tilbakemelding. Disse tre faktorene er forståelige, balanserte og konstruktive tilbakemeldinger for å skape meningsfull tilførsel for at elevene skal utvikle seg og oppmuntres til å arbeide med skriveprosessen. I lys av andre studier, forsøker denne studien å gi en dypere forståelse av å gi og å oppfatte skriftlige tilbakemeldinger. Lærernes bakgrunn og meninger, og elevenes bakgrunn og dyktighet kan muligens påvirke tilbakemeldingsprosessen. Selv om det er generell enighet om den effektive skriftlige tilbakemeldingen i henhold til resultatene av denne studien, kan de andre faktorene påvirke de individuelle oppfatningene.

Denne oppgaven gir et generelt innblikk i målbevisste skriftlige tilbakemeldinger som kan øke lærernes helhetlige bevissthet om hvordan man konstruerer systematiske kommentarer for å forbedre elevenes skriveferdigheter, og for å oppmuntre dem til å revidere og til å fortsette å skrive. Videre bør lærernes tilbakemeldingspraksis ta hensyn til de individuelle forskjellene når det gjelder å forstå skriftlige tilbakemeldinger.

Alt i alt har denne studien demonstrert hvordan meningsfulle skriftlige tilbakemeldinger bør strebe etter å utvikle og motivere elevenes skriveprosessen. Studien har også vist at skriftlige tilbakemeldinger bør belyse kontekstualitetens rolle, i tillegg til elevenes og lærernes bakgrunn og meninger i påvirkningen av denne prosessen.

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1 Introduction

Feedback has always been regarded as vital for the advancement of the second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) learners for developing learning and motivating their efforts (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). However, feedback may be frustrating and negatively affect the learners' experience with written feedback (Lee, 2008a). Therefore, there is a need to understand the impact of teacher feedback on student writing (Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Teachers' written feedback risks being counter-productive when they continue to use strategies without understanding how students react to the teacher's feedback. Furthermore, studies on students' perspectives (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996) are relatively new. Thus, more exploration toward acknowledging how students perceive the teachers' written feedback might help develop teachers' reflective and effective feedback practices. Studies (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998) found that second language (L2) and English foreign language (EFL) students believe that teacher feedback helps improve their writing. However, we do not know much about students' perceptions to benefit from the teachers' written feedback. Moreover, most studies on students' perspectives and preferences have been conducted in a university setting.

1.1 Background and aim of the study

UDIR (2020) (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and training) stresses that the competence aims for upper secondary school are to be able to "use appropriate strategies for language learning, text creation, and communication" where the students should use the knowledge of grammar and text structure in written texts. Strangely, the competence aims do not specify the role of feedback in this process. However, formative assessment, in the competence aims, suggests that "the teacher shall provide guidance on further learning and adapt the learning to enable the pupils to use the guidance" to develop their writing skills. The guidance here is not limited to written feedback; however, it provides us with a glimpse of what written feedback should deliver.

Moreover, the core curriculum in UDIR suggests that teaching shall develop students' learning and stimulate their motivation. The main focus of teaching must lie within students' learning and development regarding the students' "different experiences, prior knowledge, attitudes and needs." Hence, "good classroom management is based on insight into the needs of the pupils" (Teaching and differentiated instruction). Thus, the primary purpose of education is to systematically instruct, develop, and motivate the students' learning to meet the students' needs and proficiencies. Individuality is highlighted in UDIR's core curriculum, where students are being assessed constructively. Assessment must be balanced to provide rich and developing information (feedback) and eliminate any unproductive and unpleasant experiences. UDIR warns that the use of evaluation might hinder learning development. Accordingly, this study will try to find meeting points for general students' needs for written feedback regardless of their background, experience, and competency level, which might lower the threat of undermining the learning process. However, this study will underpin the significance of the aforementioned contextual factors to incorporate a comprehensible understanding of the different variables.

The lack of a substantial guideline to effectively implement written feedback that can address students' writing issues was the primary motive behind choosing this topic to investigate. I noticed that students

were usually passive in written feedback practices throughout my education years. I have received ineffective written feedback several times, which can hinder learning instead of enforcing it. In this case, written feedback defies its purpose and makes it challenging for the students to benefit from the teacher's knowledge. Accordingly, I designed this research to explore the students' perceptions of English written feedback in the upper high school classroom to capture the participants' perceptions of helpful written feedback. Moreover, it tries to investigate their different points of view to understand better the various meanings that can affect this process. The main concern of this research is to create reality through the participants' worldview (Crotty, 1998) to discover what effective written feedback represents in the eyes of those who perceive it. Hence, the participants' experiences with written feedback are pivotal in shaping their opinion about its different functionalities of it.

1.2 Research question and brief research design

This study seeks to explore: *How do students perceive teachers' written feedback on their English writing in a Norwegian upper secondary school general studies 11th grade (VG1) classroom?* To answer this question, a qualitative case study was implemented to discover the profound perspectives of the participants in the real-life context (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative research tends to study the field in its natural environment (Creswell, 2014). My case study design will be as follows (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013):

Figure 1.0

Choice and option in case study research

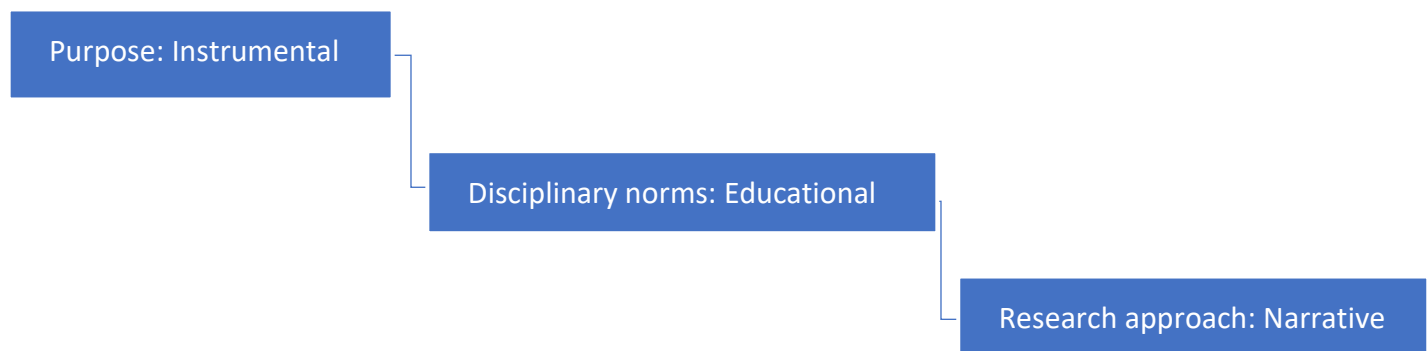


Figure 1 shows the case study design where its purpose is instrumental, which seeks a general understanding by studying or getting an insight into a single case (single classroom) (Stake, 1995). The disciplinary norms determine the context and setting of the study. In this respect, this study's context is naturally considered within the educational disciplinary standards, which according to Merriam (2009), thematic analysis is the most suitable analysis process in an educational context. The research approach is how the researcher presents the operation of the study. The narrative technique is meant to tell a story by describing the current research's data collection, methods, and procedures.

Twenty-four participants from one classroom volunteered to carry out a semi-structured survey. A semi-structured focus group will follow up to discuss the same open-ended questions from the survey to maximize and elaborate on the understanding of the various elements and perceptions.

1.3 Chapter summary and thesis structure

The primary concern of this study is to investigate the students' perceptions of English written feedback on their writing. This chapter introduced the background and aim of this study concerning writing, feedback, written feedback, and students' perspectives of written feedback to provide an overall view of the study. In addition, the research question and the study design were mentioned briefly to be unfolded later in the study. The theoretical framework chapter follows to frame this study within its theoretical foundations. From writing to students' perspectives of written feedback in general, several aspects were revealed to be narrowed down to provide the reader a broader to a narrower understanding of the matter. Chapter three (methodology) provides an elaborative view of the research design and approach followed by methods, analysis, and results which are presented thoroughly. The discussion section comes next to interpret and make sense of the generated results (themes). The conclusion chapter encloses the study by revisiting the research question, summarizing the findings, presenting the study limitations and the potential enhancement, and giving consideration for further studies.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter will give a background to this study on the different interest levels. A broader understanding will provide an overview of the significance of writing and the factors that govern this process. Furthermore, it will show first language and second language writing and how they compare. The framework will continue to narrow down the focus of this study, including assessment, feedback, written feedback, and students' perceptions of different types of feedback.

2.1 Writing

In a historical context, people used writing as a way of communication and self-expression. Hence, writing is a visual way of communication represented in the shape of signs among those who share the same apprehension of the common signs. Written language was developed from signs to the alphabet and eventually to a complete writing system that can be considered equivalent to speech. In other words, writing began as a set of signs to represent objects in real life. Afterward, through the years, the writing systems developed to become an abstract way of communication, a way to convey a meaning. For example, a sign of one sheep represents one sheep in real life, while the essence of modern writing lies in it. Writing was never considered a device to record speech, but it was rather to use the properties of speech in the shape of signs for communicative and expressive purposes (Olson, 2009). Hyland (2016) states that the meaning lies in words because meanings are encoded in the text and can be recovered by anyone with decoding (reading) skills.

2.2 Development of writing skills

Writing, in general, requires "appropriate linguistic forms" to encode a well-written composition language-wise. Along with appropriate linguistic knowledge, one must have the relevant metacognitive and strategic understanding of the writing process to administrate the cognitive resources efficiently. Writing development requires the instructors to be aware of the appropriate rhetorical requirements to advance learners writing skills (Schoonen et al., 2011, p. 32). In addition, understanding writing from a contemporary perspective stresses that writing is a "textual product, coherent arrangement of elements structured according to a system of rules" (Hyland, 2016, p. 4). In this respect, the writing process contains cognitive, social, and linguistic skills.

2.2.1 Writing as a cognitive process

Writing is a complex task that requires a set of cognitive constraint rules of transcription and orthography, which might be more demanding to novice writers. Hence, writing requires various mental activities and affective processes (Graham & Harris, 2013). The cognitive process of writing goes through three subprocess 1) generation and strategies of planning: creating of ideas 2) translation of these ideas by making a text out of them and drafting 3) revision: the emendation and redaction of the written text (Beard et al., 2009; Graham & Harris, 2013). Galbraith (2009) explains that writers generate ideas for writing from their long-term memories by recalling the relevant information to write about the developed idea. In addition, Hayes (2009) states that the involvement of memory in terms of storage and processing the data makes every individual have their unique writing style influenced by their memory. Chanquoy (2009) stresses the significance of revising and reviewing to correct and edit in writing. Both correcting and editing enhance the quality of writing by evaluating and clarifying the writer's thoughts. Bartlett (1982) identifies three cognitive processes, which are firstly revision, where

students, for instance, can revise, review, and reread their writing to locate errors and irrelevant information. In this thesis, the researcher is trying to investigate the perception of written feedback on the students' English writing to enhance their writing. Thus, revising is a powerful tool to achieve the learning goal of writing. The second process is detection, where students can know whether their text is coherent, precise, or needs to be modified. The third process is identification, where students can identify the quality of their composition. These cognitive processes are significant for this thesis because the teacher's written feedback might empower the students' revision, detection, and identification skills.

2.2.2 Writing as a social practice

Kostouli (2009) explains how writers' identities are shaped by the interaction between their writing and the social context (school context, for example). In this respect, social context influences the writer's identity and positioning through negotiation and discussion between individuals and society. Therefore, as a writer, a student's identity might be altered through interaction with the teacher. Smidt (2009) elaborates that "multidimensional" contexts influence the student's positioning and identity as a writer. Hence, students' writing is motivated by their ideas on how social writing should be at school.

On the other hand, the students' writing is affected by the teacher's beliefs, social practices, and genres in the classroom. Thus, students' positionality is determined by their impulses and is also modeled by the teacher. This kind of relationship is called interactional, which contributes to the students' writing development. On a more extensive consideration, teachers' social practices and genres in the classroom are built on the school norms and teaching requirements, which we can call the sociocultural dimension. Bove (1982) explains the sociocultural dimension, stating that "dialogic language exists in relation to other discourses." He builds this statement on Bakhtin's discourse theory which suggests that every new text contributes to making a new utterance of an enduring idea. Hence, there is a generic relation between different texts (Rule, 2006). In our context, students' writing in schools is not independent of other factors. The discourse theory suggests the interactional of different dimensions in formulating and developing students' writing in school. In this respect, Hyland (2016) states that intertextuality indicates an awareness of the writer to have an inner dialogue with the reader. The writer should consider composing an explicit text related to earlier texts and directed to readers who share the same conventions and estimations. However, individuals' perception of the intended meaning differs due to the receiver's background. In addition, Hyland (2016, p. 21) draws our attention to the roles of social and institutional orders in influencing "writers' intentions and plans for writing." Hyland stresses that some writers with low self-esteem and confidence might feel pressure from their surroundings, making them doubt their writing ability.

I have discussed the cognitive and social functions of writing previously, while the linguistic knowledge needs to be elaborated on in the next section.

2.2.3 Writing and linguistic knowledge

Writing is a multi-component process because it requires cognitive, social, and linguistic skills to produce a written text. In this case, writers need to know about the functionality of writing to convey the rhetorical requirements correctly. Schoonen et al. (2011) claim that most of the studies focus on the

writing process, and few concentrate on writing proficiency and the quality of the writing output. Linguistic knowledge in writing is more demanding for the L2 learners because native writers have learned the different use of the language functionalities from childhood age (Schoonen et al., 2011). Therefore, writing depends on long-term memory (Hayes, 2009) for more accuracy in writing down the ideas or translating these ideas into the shape of the written product (Galbraith, 2009). Thus, novice and unskilled writers might be burdened in retrieving the correct language form and vocabulary, hindering their ability to produce high-quality text (Engber, 1995). High-quality composition is sometimes associated with using various rich vocabulary (Grobe, 1981). Linguistic knowledge is not only limited to the use of terminology but also extended to the ability to translate ideas with fewer lexical errors and by using lexical variety, specificity, and sophistication (Engber, 1995). Hence, vocabulary and grammar are crucial for "formulation processes, while knowledge of spelling is important for transcription," which means knowing syntax, morphology, and orthography (Trapman et al., 2018, pp. 894-895). Yasuda (2017) adds that creating a fully functional text requires linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence construction besides cognitive and social processes. In this view, writing is considered a product made from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge (Hyland & American Council of Learned, 2003). Making a developed text needs a well-developed linguistic ability, especially for L2/FL. Yasuda (2011, p. 112) argues that meaning and form are linked generically in "constructing different kinds of genres," meaning that lexis and grammar contribute directly to producing different genres of texts.

2.3 L1 writing

Writing is a process to maintain the ability to "recall, organize, analyze, interpret, and build knowledge about content or materials" (Graham & Harris, 2013, p. 4). The significance of writing lies in the ability to 1) communicate with the others, 2) convey a written product through multifarious means (e.g., books and articles), 3) gather and preserve knowledge for learning purposes, 4) enhance the writers' cognitive abilities by developing their recording, analyzing and connecting among different concepts; thus, writing boosts the writers' intelligence 5) enhance reading and comprehension skills because writing improves the students spelling ability which leads to fluency in reading (Gallagher, 2006; Graham & Harris, 2013).

Teachers undermine the significance of writing development (Graham & Harris, 2013). The shortcomings are determined by Gallagher (2006), who listed some of the writing wrongs in schools like 1) students are doing little writing, 2) writing is not appropriately taught, 3) grammar teaching is ineffective or ignored, and 4) students' thoughts and interests are not presented in the writing topics. Hence, to develop writing skills, Gallagher (2006, p. 13) suggests that the students need more writing practice, reading and studying other writers' products, having concrete writing goals, and meaningful feedback from the teacher and their peers. On a larger scale, Graham and Harris (2013) assert the significance of cognitive process and social practice in developing writing (see cognitive process and social practice).

Here, I have underlined the issues and the solutions in developing L1 learners' writing by detecting the significance of writing in the L1 context, the wrongs in teaching and obtaining writing skills, and what must be done to address these wrongs to enhance L1 learners' writing skills. However, this thesis addresses L2 learners, and thus it is essential to discuss L2 writing, which I will address in the next section.

2.4 L2 writing

Hyland (2003) locates seven areas in L2 writing which need the presence of the teachers' attention to address and develop these L2 writing areas:

The first area is language structure, where foreign and second language writing involves linguistic knowledge, vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices. Learning linguistic skills are usually associated with imitation and manipulation of lexis and grammar. There are typically several techniques to teach the language structure, familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. These techniques allow the teachers to identify and correct errors in the student's control of the language system. However, constructing accurate sentences does not mean producing an appropriate written text because good writing extends to a more complex process to convey meaning.

The second area involves text functions, Hyland explains that the creation of functional text demands L2 writers' awareness of the "creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions, and to develop different types of paragraphs" (p. 6).

The third area is creative expression, where L2 writers should be creative and self-expressive to find their own voice in writing and make their writing more fluent and spontaneous. In addition, they should have an expressive mode to help L2 writers to position themselves within the produced text. Sharing personal meanings enforces the writers' individuality in constructing their own point of view of the theme and sheds light on their cultural and social background.

Afterward is the writing process, which is based on the cognitive ability of the L2 writers to writing activities and their abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, and propose and evaluate solutions. In this respect, L2 writers go through multiple cognitive processes to create a text, from selecting a topic, planning (e.g., brainstorming), composing (writing down the ideas on paper), revising (e.g., reorganizing and style), to editing (checking and correcting form and evidence).

Followed by content: Content is essential in writing because L2 writers should write meaningfully about a topic/theme. Establishing a meaningful text requires a coherent text built on a "sequence of key areas of subject matter" (p. 14). In this respect, L2 writers must identify the different issues of a specific topic and retrieve what will be relevant to write about. In this scenario, meaningful writing needs collecting relevant information (relevant sources), focusing on priorities, organizing the text for genuine communication, and generating purposeful vocabulary to convey the correct meaning of the topic.

Finally, the genre which defined as "we write something to achieve some purpose" (p. 18). Genre is when we use the language for particular purposes, such as writing a story. Writing follows special social conventions which allow the reader to recognize the meaning of the written text. In this view, genre implies that the writer uses text forms to convey particular intentions and information. L2 writers learn to incorporate discourse and contextual aspects of language to write texts for a specific audience.

First and second language writers have similar approaches to learning writing, including cognitive, linguistic, and rhetorical processes. However, the outcome might differ regarding the linguistic and cultural differences between L1 and L2 writers. Therefore, I will demonstrate these differences in the next section.

2.5 Writing in L1 compared to L2

Silva (1993, p. 657) assumes that L1 and L2 writings are similar in employing "a recursive composing process, involving planning, writing, and revising." However, he found that L1 and L2 are different in writing. In his study, Silva found that (pp. 661-667):

- L2 writers planned less than L1 writers. L2 did fewer goal settings and had more difficulty achieving these goals. In addition, L2 had less valuable generated material, and more of the generated ideas never found their way to written text.
- L2 was less fluent in transcribing and needed help from a dictionary as they had more concern and difficulty with vocabulary. Moreover, L2 was slower in writing as writing was time-consuming and less productive. Silva claims that most studies conducted to study the fluency of L2 texts suggested that L2 writing is a less fluent process and is shorter.
- L2 writing was less reviewed than L1 writing. The evidence showed that L2 tends to reread and reflect less than L1 on written texts. The L2 revision focused more on grammar and fewer mechanics.
- L2 writers are less accurate as they make more errors. These errors contain morphosyntactic errors, lexicosemantic errors, verbs, propositions, articles, and nouns errors.
- Silvia claims that several studies showed that L2 texts were less effective, which makes them lower in quality

However, both L1 and L2 writings are similar in general composing process patterns. In addition, on an individual level, skilled writers write differently from novice writers.

How do students perceive teacher's written feedback on their English writing? is the central question I want to investigate in this thesis. In the previous section, I have written about writing, the development of writing, and the factors that affect, enhance, and shape both L1 and L2 English writing. Another key concept in my research question is feedback; however, before discussing feedback and the perception of feedback, I need to introduce a more general concept (assessment) that feedback/ written feedback is a sub-concept to unfold later. Hence, in the next section, I will be discussing assessment to give a factual background to this study.

2.6 Assessment

The significance of assessment comes from its orientational power to effectively guide the students through a "particular sequence of instructional activities" to make them aware of the intended learning outcomes (Wiliam, 2011, p. 3). In this case, what is assessment? Assessment is a procedure for making inferences to measure and develop someone's proficiency level, such as a teacher assessing a student's performance. Teachers often use activities in the classroom or student assignments as input to gain information from the learners. Hence, teachers can benefit from the acquired knowledge by monitoring through an interactive environment between the teacher and the students from one side and between the students from the other side to enhance and administrate the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Black and Wiliam (1998) draw attention to the central role of assessment in developing student learning. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the "fundamental understanding of education measurements" because the assessment has developed to cover several angles of students' learning by using a "wide variety of evidence-eliciting techniques" like oral interviews, implementing tests, and responding to designated questions (Popham, 2009, pp. 5-6).

In addition, Xu and Brown (2016, p. 155) add six components that govern teacher assessment in practice:

- 1) The knowledge base that consists of knowledge of assessment purposes, content and methods, grading, feedback, peer and self-assessment, interpretation and communication, and ethics.
- 2) Interpretive and guiding framework when the teachers use the theoretical knowledge and its implementation to indicate the belief systems that teachers have about the nature and purpose of assessment which are formed from.
- 3) The teachers' conceptions of assessment should include cognitive dimensions, view of learning and epistemological beliefs, and affective dimensions.
- 4) In macro sociocultural and micro institutional contexts, the teacher must comply with the universal (social, political, and cultural context) and local (e.g., school) rules which might draw boundaries to guide teachers to achieve different goals and outcomes depending on different contexts.
- 5) Hence, teacher assessment literacy in practice is built on external and internal factors, and teachers should make some compromises to balance the external and internal in achieving the goal of assessment.
- 6) Teacher learning is vital to developing teacher assessment practices and compromises among different factors to cope with different assessment practices. In this respect, the teacher is not only an instructor but also an assessor by being aware of all the components of assessment. Teachers have a new role and identity to integrate assessment as a pedagogical function and make a deeper engagement in giving a meaningful assessment which might push the learning and teaching process positively forward.

Moreover, Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016) have determined two functions of the assessment. The first one is to measure and administrate the final products of students' work; the second is to enhance and develop students' knowledge to meet the required goal of learning. It is crucial to dedicate a section to discussing these two kinds of assessments in detail.

2.7 Summative and formative assessment

Summative assessment functions to "encapsulate all the evidence up to a given point" (Taras, 2005, p. 468). In contrast, formative assessment is dynamic interference to enhance and develop the students' skills by narrowing the gap between students' knowledge and the current level and the intended teaching and learning goals or the required standard (Sadler, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 2008; Taras, 2005).

Dixson and Worrell (2016, p. 154) have determined vital differences and practices between summative and formative assessment (Table 1).

Table 1*Characteristics of Formative and Summative Assessment*

Characteristic	Formative assessment	Summative assessment
Purpose	To improve teaching and learning	Evaluation of learning outcomes
	To diagnose student difficulties	Placement, promotion decisions
Formality	Usually informal	Usually formal
Timing of administration	Ongoing, before and during instruction	Cumulative, after instruction
Developers	Classroom teachers to test publishers	Classroom teachers to test publishers
Level of stakes	Low-stakes	High-stakes
Psychometric rigor	Low to high	Moderate to high
Types of questions asked	What is working What needs to be improved	Is the student prepared for next level of activity
Examples	How can it be improved	
	Observation	Projects
	Homework	Performance assessments
	Question and answer sessions	Portfolios
	Self-evaluation	Papers
	Reflections on performance	In-class examinations
	Curriculum-based measures	State and national tests

Table 1 shows the properties and characteristics of both formative and summative assessments. Hence, we can notice that formative assessment essentially focuses on improving student performance. Teachers and students provide information to modify teaching and learning through feedback which is a significant part of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). In addition, Black and Wiliam (1998b) assert that formative assessment informs the learners of the learning goals and what to be done to enhance the following performance. Even though formative evaluations can be graded, the evaluations, in this case, are not for final grading because evaluation is a way to measure students' understanding of the information to develop effective teaching (Dixon & Worrel, 2016). The success of the formative assessment in developing teaching and learning lies in both teachers and students (Black & Wiliam, 1998a). Teachers must be critical assessors by considering internal factors (e.g., teachers' practices and beliefs) and external factors (e.g., institutional structures and values), which might make the teacher struggle to compromise between them.

On the other hand, students' involvement in formative assessment is found in two actions. The first is the learners' perception of the gap between required goals and their state of skill, knowledge, and understanding. The second is learners' action to narrow the gap to reach the needed goal (Sadler, 1989). According to Black and Wiliam (1998a), students' perceptions of the gap between the desired goals and students' state can be attained through, for example, self-, peer-, and teacher assessment. The teacher

is responsible for interpreting the gap through a message about it, Black and Wiliam explain. The involvement of students in formative assessment relies on:

The effects of beliefs about the goals of learning, about one's capacity to respond, about the risks involved in responding in various ways, and about what learning work should be like: all of these affect the motivation to take action, the selection of a line of action and the nature of one's commitment to it. (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 21)

On the other hand, summative assessment is cumulative, designed to judge the students' performance and final work for grading purposes (Dixon & Worrel, 2016). They add that summative assessment is less frequent because it occurs on final exams, term papers, etc. Hence, it determines students' level and skills (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). Harlen and Gardlen (2010) argue that summative assessment is critical because it can give career guidance, show the eligibility for special programs, and decide whether the student should advance to the next grade. However, Black et al. (2010) state that summative assessment does not necessarily function as only a grading purpose; it can also be a tool to enhance the learning quality. Teacher practices play a role in establishing a formative/summative interface to inform the students about the different assessment criteria and procedures. Achieving that requires developing the teachers' practices to compromise between curriculum aims and their beliefs. In this case, students are not "victims of testing"; rather, they can be actively involved in the test process, and thus tests can help them enhance their learning (Black et al., 2010, p. 226). One example of a formative-summative link is to provide the students with a grading rubric to make them aware of the grading criteria and help them enhance their understanding and develop their skills to meet the learning goals accordingly. In addition, students can also be involved in developing/revising existing rubrics so that they better understand and take ownership of how they are assessed (Dyrdal, 2021). In this respect, Black and Wiliam (2018) argue that both summative (assessment of learning) and formative (assessment for learning) assessment should be called *assessment as learning* because assessment is "a procedure for making inferences" (p. 553). In this case, where the inferences are related to the status of the student and their future, then the assessment is considered summative. Where the inferences are associated with the type of action to help the students improve, then the assessment is considered formative. Thus, the same assessment (see grading rubric example) can be summative and formative. The functionality of assessment is determined on "who decides on the assessment, where the assessment takes place, and how the students' work is scored" (p. 554).

For clarification purposes, I want to clarify that some writers (Lee & Coniam, 2013; Wiliam, 2011) refer to formative assessment as *assessment for learning* and summative assessment as *assessment of learning*. In this thesis, I adopted the terms summative and formative to discuss assessment.

Concluding on this section, I have discussed assessment to build a foundation for different aspects of evaluation. It was vital to discuss assessment before discussing feedback/written feedback because it provides the reader with a more extensive view of the evaluating processes before diving into the significance of feedback in the assessment process.

2.8 Feedback

Feedback can be understood as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). This definition by Hattie and Timperley introduces us to the power of feedback in providing

corrective information, alternative plan, clarification of an idea, etc. In addition, Sadler (1989, p. 120) recognizes feedback as a powerful tool and “a key element of formative assessment” because it narrows the gap between the current level of understanding and the aimed level of understanding. William (2011) points out that feedback is a significant component in formative assessment, consisting of feedback and instructional correctives.

Activities undertaken by teacher-and by their students in assessing themselves-that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs. (Black & Wiliam, 1998b, p. 140)

In this respect, feedback is the core of formative assessment, advancing teaching and learning. Feedback, in this case, is not only information provided by the teacher apart from students’ perceptions, but it is also adequate information that alters the students’ understanding to advance their learning. Two sides are involved in giving and receiving the feedback in an interactional environment, the teacher and the student. On the first side is the teacher, who uses feedback to provide information “with respect to readiness, diagnosis, and remediation” (Sadler, 1989, p. 120). Therefore, teachers must design their feedback to address a learning context in which the students can benefit from the instructions to enhance their performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this respect, Ramaprasad (1983) states that the information in the feedback must be utilized to alter the gap between the reference level and the actual level to be called feedback. Thus, teacher’s written feedback should diagnose, correct, and provide information to enhance current and future writing regarding competence aims. For example, when the teacher provides feedback on “I plays video games every day,” it is not sufficient to only point out the grammar error. The teacher should mark, correct (play) and explain why it is not correct (subject-verb agreement).

On the other side is the student who uses feedback to “monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances so that aspects associated with success or high quality can be recognized and reinforced, and unsatisfactory aspects modified or improved” (Sadler, 1989, p. 121). For instance, when a student receives feedback, “you have a smooth transition between the different sections; however, you need always to remember capital letters with names.” In this scenario, the student can recognize the strength to keep as a future reference and learn or improve his/her writing. In this respect, positive and critical feedback is vital in pointing out the excellence and flaws in students’ performance (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). However, the effectiveness of feedback depends on addressing students’ mistakes and errors constructively (Fong et al., 2018). In this respect, Ferris (2007, p. 167) argues that teachers should strive to provide constructive criticism “to find the correct balance between the intervention (helpful) and appropriation (harmful).” In this context, intervention means that the student and the teacher can continuously have constructive criticism. At the same time, appropriation (e.g., using hedging to soften the feedback) is appropriate to some extent through balancing it with constructive criticism, especially for ESL students because clarity is vital in advancing their writing. The combination of constructive criticism and appropriation provide both encouragement and productive instruction.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that feedback must have a generic informational connection to a specific task and provide affective processes in which the student can relate to the particular information in the feedback. These affective processes can help the students to “restructuring understanding, confirming to the students that they are correct or incorrect, indicating that more

information is available or needed, pointing to directions students could pursue, and/or indicating alternative strategies to understand particular information” (p. 82). In addition, the teacher should recognize the three aspects of feedback. Firstly, feed-up (where am I going?) where “critical aspect of feedback is the information given to students and their teachers about the attainment of learning goals related to the task or performance” (p. 88), extensive and clear feedback contribute to achieving these learning goals and success criteria (Black & Wiliam, 1998a). For instance, teachers can provide the students with the purpose, goal, and overview of the lesson they are taking part in, and thus they can focus on content related to this purpose. Secondly, feed-back (how am I going?) depends on teacher, peer, task, or self in determining the current situation. After the students are provided with the educational goal of the lesson, it is natural for students to do discrete tasks related to the educational purpose of the lesson. In this case, the feed-back functions as a development tool to track the students’ progress and suggest actions to enhance the students’ practices towards that learning goal. Finally, feed-forward (where to next?) depends on the built-up information obtained from feedback to lead to greater possibilities for learning. Teachers can collect information from the students’ overall feedback and locate any potential modifications in their teaching practices to make future instruction more effective. This step requires great flexibility because teachers need to customize their instructional planning to a specific group of students.

The core concern of this thesis is students’ perception of English written feedback. I have discussed, so far, several topics concerning the different aspects of my research question (writing, assessment, feedback). In the next section, I will narrow the concept of feedback to cover written feedback. Afterward, I will present students’ perceptions of written feedback.

2.8.1 Teacher Written feedback

Written feedback plays a significant role in second and foreign language writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a) because it provides the students with suitable teacher’s reactions in the shape of comments to enhance the students’ writing and justify their final grade (Hyland, 2003). Hyland and Hyland (2006) claim that several studies investigated the effectiveness of teacher feedback in improving students’ writing products. Some of the early research conducted on native English speakers suggested that “much written feedback was of poor quality, and was frequently misunderstood by students, being vague, inconsistent” (p. 84). On the contrary, they continue, newer empirical studies suggest that feedback can improve writing. According to Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996), teachers’ feedback allows learners to measure their advancement as writers. Hence, the students should be able to understand the teacher’s feedback, respond to the teacher’s comments, and be influenced to enhance their performance (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996).

Additionally, Ferris, et al. (1997) suggest that skilled teachers can vary their feedback according to contextual features, including each individual student’s ability and personality. Sheppard (1992) argues that “more empirical research of all types is needed to confirm, clarify and deepen our understanding of what may be a universal tendency.” Sheppard’s argument emphasizes the significance of studying different types of teachers’ written feedback and invites us to have a deeper understanding of these various types. In this respect, I will discuss the different types of written feedback concerning writing.

2.9 Students' perceptions of written feedback

As Ferris (1995), Hyland (2003), and Hyland and Hyland (2001) stated that the effectiveness of feedback is related to the understanding of the feedback. Thus, learners' perception of feedback is vital in the learning process. Therefore, this thesis is trying to investigate students' perceptions of written feedback to provide us with a better understanding of these perceptions. Ferris (1995) and Hyland (1998) concluded that students believe that written feedback helps improve their writing and grammar.

2.9.1 Error-correction feedback

Error correction feedback helps the students discover and become aware of their own mistakes (Ferris, 2007). For example, the teacher can point out the improper use of articles like (a orange), and explain the correct usage. Several studies (Ferris, 1999, 2007; Ferris, 2012; Hyland & Hyland, 2001) emphasized the significance of error correction feedback in enhancing the students' writing. On the contrary, other studies (Truscott, 1999, 2007) argue against the capability of error correction in developing and strengthening student writing. Error correction is harmful and should be abolished, according to Truscott. Truscott concluded that correction has no significant effect on the students' enhancement or has a minimal amount if it exists. Other studies (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2001), however, linked the effectiveness of written feedback to the understanding of the perceivers; the more students understand the corrective written feedback, the more effective it will be. In this context, Baker and Hansen Bricker (2010) raised the question of whether teachers should abandon politeness in providing feedback for the sake of clarity? For instance, politeness can include question words (e.g., can you, would you) or use a phrase to soften criticism (e.g., it seems that you are trying to...). Thus, Baker and Hansen Bricker found that even though politeness can soften criticism, directness helps the students be more accurate in correcting their errors.

2.9.2 Form and content feedback

Hyland (1998, referring to Leki, 1991) states that a survey conducted by Leki on college-level students to discover their attitude toward error correction found that the students wished to have their mistakes corrected. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) discuss that for many ESL students writing in English focuses on the meaning to advance their expression of ideas. In addition, ESL students consider writing in English a way of practicing their English. Therefore, they required different types of feedback that contained both form and content. Hence, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996) found that ESL students value form-focused feedback to improve their writing and grammatical errors.

Furthermore, Ferris (1995) found that students needed to receive comments on their content and grammar in this respect. However, contextual features are required in order to examine the teacher's feedback on individual students and their texts (Ferris, 1997; Ferris et al., 1997). In this respect, Hyland (1998) found that individuals perceive teachers' written feedback differently. For example, one of the participants in her study stated that she values grammatical correction and praising her grammatical abilities, while another participant considered praising a waste of time. Thus, different individuals perceive written feedback variously; some might favor receiving written feedback on the form and others on the content depending on students' vision of helpful feedback. In this context, the focus on form and content varies depending on the "individual writers, their problems, and their reasons for writing" (p. 275).

All these studies suggest that commenting on form and content in students' writing is valuable. However, ESL and EFL individual writers might vary in perceiving the teacher's written feedback. Therefore, Hyland (1998) suggests that students and teachers should communicate together to establish contextual features helping individual students to maximize the benefit of written feedback.

2.9.3 Students' perception of different types of written feedback

Praise is an act of providing credit to another for some "characteristic, attribute, skills, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 186). For example, praising as feedback might contain commentary such as, "You have an excellent range of vocabulary, and you reflect brilliantly on the topic." This type of commentary complements the students' written products and points out the excellence in their writing. On the other hand, criticism is an "expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment" (Hyland, 2004, p. 44). For instance, a student might receive comments such as, "Revise all the subject-verb agreement in your paper," or "your argument is not relevant to the topic." In this respect, the comments have negative connotations and might cause discomfort for the receiver. Hyland and Hyland (2001) state a third category in addition to praise and criticism: *suggestion*. Suggestion, according to them, is coming from a more positive end of a continuum. It differs from criticism because it contains an "explicit recommendation for remediation, a relatively clear and accomplished action for improvement, which is sometimes referred to as "constructive criticism" (p. 186). Suggestion means to mitigate and soften criticism to provide informative and constructive feedback at the same time. In this case, written feedback is intended to deliver high-quality information clearly to develop students' writing effectively. For instance, instead of writing "your argument is not relevant," the teacher might ask, "what do you mean here?" and then provides some suggestions to enhance the quality of the argument. Appraisal and criticism are complex processes because the main goal of the teachers is to use the feedback to reinforce writing behaviors, and they are not simply appraising writing. Therefore, teachers have different conflicting roles while giving feedback: teachers are also proofreaders, evaluators, and facilitators simultaneously (Reid, 1994). An early study (Brophy, 1981) found that praise must be informative and credible to be effective, or praise might not encourage good writing. Keh's (1990) study shows that students value extensive, explanatory, and specific comments in written feedback, but they also value motivational praising of the written product. However, insincere and uninformative praise ought to confuse students. Ferris' (1995) study about students' perceptions of teacher feedback shows that students value and remember positive comments; however, they also expect constructive criticism rather than platitudes. Hyland and Hyland (2001) consider positive feedback an important factor in developing writers because positive feedback can facilitate students' text. They suggest that using praise is intended to motivate students' next writing.

Hyland and Hyland (2001) determine some techniques to mitigate criticism and employ suggestions through comments (see table 2).

Table 2.

Mitigated techniques to soften criticism

Mitigated techniques	Examples
paired act patterns where criticism accompanied with praise and suggestions can “fulfill both pedagogic and interpersonal functions for teachers” (p. 196)	“Your text is well structured; however, you need to practice your use of punctuations. For example, you must insert commas between listed segments (e.g., I have bought apples, oranges, and banana).”
Hedges are used when softening criticism is the goal of this technique. According to Hyland (1998), hedges have both epistemic and affective functions. Hedges are not meant to suggest probabilities, and it mitigates critical comments.	Using terms like could, seemed, wonder, and might. For example, “this paragraph seemed too long, and I wonder if it could have been shortened and addressed the topic.”
Personal attribution is used when teachers reflect their “personal opinion” in the comments (p. 198). Hence, “teachers can make a subtle adjustment to the interactional context and perhaps foreground a different persona” (p. 198) to express a less threatening voice.	“I am sorry, but I find it hard to track your argument concerning the topic. I suggest having a clear outline to make it easier for the reader to understand your argument points.”
Interrogative form is where teachers tend to ask questions to highlight “knowledge limitations and can be used to weaken the force of a statement by making it relative to writers’ state of knowledge.” (p. 199)	“Did you check subject-verb agreement? Do you consider this relevant? Did you check spelling mistakes attentively?”

Table 2 demonstrates the different use of mitigation to soften critical comments. These techniques incorporate praise and suggestion with criticism, softening terms (e.g., seemed and wonder), personal attribution, and interrogative form to make criticism more acceptable and welcoming.

Concerning this thesis about student perception of teacher’s feedback, these strategies might help in motivating and encouraging the L2 students to continue writing.

Writing is personal, and therefore there is a threat to be stolen from the writer by the teachers’ comments (Hyland & Hyland, 2001 as cited from Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984). A teacher’s comment might overstep students’ text which is considered their domain. In this concern, students may not develop their cognitive and writing skills because they are merely rewriting their text to reflect their teachers’ concerns. The significance of suggestions is to give the students the motive to develop as writers by using mitigation and providing probabilities to encourage them to enhance their texts without

feeling that they are imposed or limited by the teacher's comments. However, such overconcern about appropriation might deprive L2 students of getting the direct and concrete help they need (Reid, 1994). According to Baker and Hansen Bricker (2010), imperative verbs are used to provide instructions to students like "check spelling" or "revise page n.2". This kind of directiveness might affect some students negatively because it might cause interpersonal damage to the students (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). In this view, some suggestions favor indirect feedback over direct feedback because it is more polite and softens a face-threatening situation. In addition, indirect feedback allows students to learn to correct their mistakes by themselves.

Moreover, indirect feedback can facilitate student improvement in the long learning run. However, direct feedback is more straightforward in conveying a message, whereas students might misunderstand and misinterpret indirect feedback (speech). Ambiguity might triumph over clarity in indirect feedback as SL students might not realize that "can you provide an example here?" is a polite invitation to make required changes. Thus, the teacher must not sacrifice clarity for politeness (Baker & Hansen Bricker, 2010, pp. 76-77). In this respect, Hyland and Hyland (2001) noticed that L2 students were often unable to understand indirect or hedged comments. By using mitigated comments, misunderstanding ought to happen in L2 and FL. They found that unclear comments can misdirect the students from making the required changes in their texts.

2.10 Review of previous research

Cheng et al.'s (2021) study examined four novice writing teachers' beliefs about written feedback and their actual practices in a Chinese EFL context. The multiple-case study they conducted revealed that the teachers' beliefs about comprehensive written feedback were translated into the actual procedures. Hence, there was a match between the teachers' beliefs and their practices regarding comprehension. However, like another study (Lee, 2008a), novice teachers focus more on the local errors (form) and neglect the global ones (content). This argument is understandable when we know that Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) found that EFL students preferred to have their local errors corrected more than the global issues. However, the requirement of balanced and systematic written feedback lies in its ability to deliver equal attention to the form and content (Cheng et al., 2021). Even though the novice teachers used direct and indirect feedback, it was not espoused in their beliefs set (Cheng et al., 2021). That raises a question: to what extent are teachers aware of the different techniques of English written feedback?

Can technology assist teachers' in facilitating the writing process to provide effective formative feedback? Engeness (2018) collaborated qualitative and quantitative methods to find whether technology (computer-based essay-critiquing system) can enhance the teachers' interventions in advancing the students' writing skills in the Norwegian upper secondary school. In comparison, a collaborating peer (comparison class) was implemented to measure and compare the results of both processes. The participants had to write an article about English as a global language. On one side, Engeness (2018) concluded that with the interaction with EssayCritic (the computer application), the teacher assisted the students in completing the task. On the other side, interaction in comparison class has enabled the teacher to develop the students' writing skills through assessment for learning (formative assessment). Hence, technology is yet to be considered an effective formative assessment tool, while the teacher is still the operator to implement effective interventions to increase the students' writing proficiencies. However, another study (Cunningham, 2019) found that using technology can be

as effective as written feedback, sometimes more efficient. This study compared the effectiveness of screencast and text feedback on 12 students over four assignments in an intermediate ESL writing course. Six surveys, draft comparison, and group interview was implemented to study the students' perceptions of screencast and text feedback. According to Cunningham (2019), screencast was more efficient because it was clearer, easier to understand, and less time-consuming in revising than text feedback.

This section presented some related studies to this research. This section aims to demonstrate how written feedback can be handled in different situations and contexts and expand the knowledge of teachers' beliefs about written feedback and their practices and the role and effectiveness of technology in providing feedback on writing compared to the conventional way.

3 Methodology

A qualitative research approach is optimal for my thesis since I want to investigate the students' perception of English written feedback on their writing. Maxwell (2013) states that qualitative research is a process that tends to see the world through people. Hence, I want to know more about English written feedback from the students' lenses of the world. Creswell (2014, pp. 185-186) argues that several qualitative methods have some distinctive characteristics:

- Natural setting: data collection occurs in the field in its natural environment.
- Researcher as a key instrument: Researchers collect data themselves by relying on their developed tools.
- Multiple sources of data: qualitative researchers gather various forms of data.
- Inductive and deductive data analysis: qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract information units. It is inductive through going back and forth between the themes to establish a comprehensive set of themes. In deductive analysis, the researcher looks back into the evidence to support each theme.
- Emergent design: research might be changed and modified under progress.
- Reflexivity: researcher's background may shape the direction of the study.
- Holistic account: qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study.

Maxwell (2013) determines five practical goals for qualitative research; however, I will present two relevant to this research. The first goal is to understand the meaning of the participants in a particular context or situation (participants' perspective in this thesis). Schwandt (2007) emphasizes that there is no real world outside our construction. The real world is seen and constructed according to our perception of it. Bhattachary (2008) explains that social science is an interpretive approach when we focus on the meaning of people in understanding a situation or context. The second goal is to understand a particular context where the participants act. In addition, qualitative research is concerned with the influence of this context on the participants' actions. In this respect, I want to investigate the impact of English written feedback on the students' perception of it. Merriam (2009, p. 5) agrees with Maxwell that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences." Merriam's meaning of interpretive research directly relates to qualitative research, which assumes that reality is constructed within the social context where multiple interpretations or realities are located in a single event. In this respect, I want to investigate the different meanings of the participants concerning English written feedback. Andrade (2009, as quoted from Schwandt, 1994, p. 118) adds that "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it." In other words, this means that every individual has different perspective of the same topic. For example, students who share the same class might perceive the same topic differently depending on their experience and beliefs.

3.1 Case study

Merriam (2009) states that a case study is a search for meaning and understanding, and it is an inductive investigative strategy. In this respect, a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. Yin (2009) defines a case study as empirical research exploring a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. According to Merriam (2009), a case study is a single bounded unity.

Therefore, a case study can be a person, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific curriculum. Thinking of the boundaries of my study, I can state that my case is bounded to Norwegian students' perception of English written feedback in one specific EFL classroom at one upper high school in the middle of Norway.

Merriam (2009) points out three characteristics of a case study. A case study is particularistic, which means that case study focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. It is descriptive, which needs to describe the phenomenon under study. Finally, it is heuristic to illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, Merriam (1988) suggests that a case study allows for an in-depth investigation to document multiple perspectives and present different points of view.

As a novice researcher, I was confused about the design and epistemological stance of the case study. While exploring different viewpoints of case studies, Yazan (2015) found that various researchers follow different epistemological perspectives, which according to Crotty (1998), is the nature and production of nature. The prominent researchers that Yazan (2015) referred to are Yin (2009), Merriam (2009), and Stake (1995). Yazan found that the epistemological commitment for Yin leans toward positivism. Positivism suggests that the meaning exists objectively in the world, independent of human concern (Crotty, 1998).

On the contrary, the epistemological perspective for Merriam and Stake is constructivism. Constructivism suggests that knowledge and meaning are constructed by people (Crotty, 1998). Since I explore a particular phenomenon (student's perception of English written feedback), constructivism is the mindset that I followed to extract the knowledge and meaning of the studied phenomenon from the participants. In this view, a case study is flexible, as Stake (1995) suggests, because a case study is less of a methodological choice than selecting what is to be studied in a bounded context. The flexibility of a case study is also shown in choosing any method that is beneficial for data selection (Merriam, 2009).

Stake (1995) and Crowe et al. (2011) determine three types of case studies. The first type is intrinsic when there is an obligation to a particular case. This case is given, which means we study this case for its uniqueness. The researcher is not interested in similar cases, and there is no persuasion for comparing and generalizing. The researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case, and therefore it is called an intrinsic case study. For example, the researcher might study the reasons behind bad grades in English in a specific lower high school classroom. Here, the researcher is not interested in any other lower high school classrooms. This kind of study is highly bounded to this particular place and time. The second type of case study is instrumental when the researcher seeks a general understanding by studying or getting an insight into a single case. For instance, my study focuses on the relationship between English written feedback and the students' perception of it, giving us insight into this phenomenon. My interest in the perception of English written feedback makes an instrumental case study suitable for investigating a specific phenomenon. When we know that a single case is an instrument in a relevant context to understand a particular phenomenon better, choosing several instrumental cases to have a general and even broader understanding of an issue than a single instrument is called a *collective case study*. It is essential to coordinate between individual studies. For example, If I had decided to collect data from different classrooms in different schools, my study would have been a collective case study.

3.2 Research context and participants

My case focuses on a particular phenomenon (students' perception of English written feedback), and it is bounded to a group of students in a specific cohort within a particular school in the middle of Norway. After deciding to study the students' perception of English written feedback, I searched for the most relevant sample to fit this investigation. The nature of my research influenced my choice because I needed a selection of students who have experience with English writing and written feedback. Therefore, a high school classroom was the optimal choice for my research. I applied and got the project approved by the NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data) (Appendix B). The application ensures that participation is voluntary; students have to give consent to participate in the study and that they could at any point withdraw from the study and have their information anonymized.

I contacted a prominent high school to have the opportunity to conduct my research in one of its classes. The correspondence with the school started in July 2020 with the English principal at the school. The correspondence led to an invitation to present my topic in person and research to the English principal and teachers at the school to have the insight to provide me with the most relevant sample of data collecting. One of the teachers allowed me to conduct my data collection (semi-structured survey and semi-structured group interview) in (VG1) general study classroom. Unfortunately, the data collection could not be started until late November because of the pandemic situation at the time. I sent the teacher the information letter, which contained all the information about my study, before distributing the methods among the participants. After collecting the consent from those who agreed to participate, I started collecting data. Twenty-four (N=24) students gave their consent to participate in both semi-structured survey and group interview.

3.3 Data collection, methods, and procedures

3.3.1 Semi-structured survey

Twenty-four students participated in the survey. A semi-structured survey means that the survey contains closed-ended questions and open-ended questions for collecting qualitative text answers from respondents. I designed the survey to have the closed-ended question as a warmup for the students to engage them further in answering the open-ended question. Qualitative research requires investigating the participants' meaning of a topic. Therefore, open-ended is the leading information extractor that allows the students to respond to the question freely. I developed the questions to cover different angles of written feedback built on previous research knowledge (open-ended questions' objectives can be found in the appendix).

I made the survey accessible through a secure website (nettskjema.no). After deciding to survey at a specific time in November 2020, I provided the teacher with the survey link to be distributed among the students. Unfortunately, the Corona situation and limitation of time prevented me from attending at the school when the survey was conducted. I informed the teacher that I would be available for any inquiry related to the survey during the conducting time. The teacher took charge of explaining the questions if that was necessary.

The survey consisted of 10 closed-ended questions/statements, two introductory open-ended questions, and eleven in-depth, open-ended questions. The survey estimation time was around 30 to 45 minutes to finish. All responses were collected and preserved on the online website to download the responses as PDF or Excel files. The benefit of the online survey was the ability to easily distribute it among the students and make them use their laptops to respond. Another pro of the online survey was that, as I mentioned before, it let me download an Excel file of the responses to be inserted later in NVivo to start the analysis process. Finally, the students had the chance to edit, change or withdraw their answers twenty-four hours after initiating the survey. The drawback of this survey was the inability to monitor the process and assist the students in explaining the questions. Therefore, some qualitative data extraction might have failed to find its way to the answer. There was a difference in response time, as one can see in figure 2.

Figure 2

Response duration

Vis Bygg skjema Innstillinger Rettigheter Innhent svar Se resultater

< [Se resultater](#)

Leverte svar

Svar	Svartid	
10863131	5 minutter 45 sekunder	Slett
10863161	4 minutter 31 sekunder	Slett
10863194	5 minutter 33 sekunder	Slett
10863226	9 minutter 17 sekunder	Slett
10863229	10 minutter 36 sekunder	Slett
10863237	12 minutter 57 sekunder	Slett
10863251	11 minutter 47 sekunder	Slett
10863272	14 minutter 37 sekunder	Slett
10863286	12 minutter	Slett
10863287	13 minutter 58 sekunder	Slett
10863290	14 minutter 39 sekunder	Slett
10863302	15 minutter 38 sekunder	Slett
10863304	16 minutter 23 sekunder	Slett
10863332	22 minutter 39 sekunder	Slett
10863389	20 minutter 58 sekunder	Slett
10863401	19 minutter 3 sekunder	Slett
10863450	22 minutter 59 sekunder	Slett
10863470	16 minutter 30 sekunder	Slett
10863478	19 minutter 34 sekunder	Slett
10863480	25 minutter 13 sekunder	Slett
10863481	21 minutter 14 sekunder	Slett
10863488	22 minutter 29 sekunder	Slett
10863527	25 minutter 35 sekunder	Slett
10863568	27 minutter 55 sekunder	Slett

[Slett alle svar](#) [Vis alle svar som PDF](#)

Figure 2 shows the time spent by the participants to complete the survey. The response duration varies between 4.31 minutes to 27.55 minutes.

This difference shows that some participants did not take enough time to adequately answer the questions, while others spent enough time responding. I reckon that some participants were not interested in responding and wanted to finish as soon as possible, which might have generated meaningless data. On the other hand, some participants took enough time to read, understand, and respond adequately to the questions, which might have produced meaningful data.

3.3.2 Focus group

A week after, as was decided with the teacher, I conducted the semi-structured interview (focus group interview). According to Merriam (2009, p. 93), “a focus group is an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge of the topic.” Merriam adds that the issue is constructed within the interaction of the group to give a constructive perspective. Patton (2002) states that the goal of a focus group is to create a discursive environment to provide comments beyond their initial responses in the light of the responses of the other. He adds (p. 386) that “the object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others.” Therefore, a focus group interview can help the researcher to collect data from the participants’ perception of a specific topic and how a group of people thinks about a topic (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In addition, Savin-Baden and Major stress that the participants in a focus group interview dare to give responses without hesitation. Thus, a focus group interview was the optimal method for this research.

The semi-structured focus group interview questions consist of the same questions as the open-ended questions in the survey (Appendix D). The advantage of repeating the same questions from the survey is that the participants have become more acquainted with the topic and could reflect more on it in an interactive environment and discuss it elaborately among themselves. Since it is semi-structured, it allowed me to ask for elaboration and explanation. The focus group interview was conducted a week after running the survey. The interview was conducted in the same classroom as the survey. After talking with the teacher, we agreed to carry out the discussion after recruiting. The teacher asked me to go around the classroom to chat randomly with the students about the recruitment. Five students voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview. There were no predefined criteria in the recruiting process. The teacher gave us access to a room attached to the primary classroom to start the interview. A voice recording device was used to record the interview, which was borrowed from NTNU technical support before the interview. The interview duration is 30 minutes.

3.4 Data analysis

This section describes the data analysis process where I have used thematic analysis. In the thematic analysis section, I define this type of analysis and explain the pros and cons of using this type. Followed by thematic data analysis, where I demonstrate the process of this analysis step by step.

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is “the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meaning and imagery of the work.” That is how VanManen (1990, p. 78) defines thematic analysis as an act of seeing the meaning away from a rule-bounded process. While Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define it as a means “for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (theme) within data.” This type of analysis gives the researcher the freedom to find “the notion of theme we are also able to clarify further the nature of human science research” (VanManen, 1990, p. 79). However, VanManen argues that thematic analysis might be considered irrelevant because it is a means to get at the notion we are addressing. Therefore, theme gives control and order to our research and writing. Braun and Clarke (2006) consider thematic analysis widely used; however, “there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it.” (p. 79). Nowell et al., (2017) add that the lack of literature about thematic analysis may cause uncertainty and confusion to novice researcher, and its flexibility may lead to inconsistency. Even though flexibility might cause inconsistency, it provides rich and detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and its “flexible technique with fewer specified procedures, permitting researchers to tailor it to match their own requirements” (King, 2011, p. 258). Moreover, VanManen (1990) considers the desire of finding a meaning and sense is not just a psychological state but also a state of being. In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that other types of analysis (e.g., decomposition analysis and content analysis) are essentially thematic. Hence, according to VanManen (1990), theme tries to get at the notion, give a shape to the shapeless, and describe the content of the idea. However, clarity on the process and practice of the method is pivotal (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Scholars such as VanManen (1990) and Braun and Clarke (2006) agree that thematic analysis is a process to find patterns in the data. Another advantage of using thematic analysis that is quick to learn because it has few prescriptions and procedures (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, thematic analysis allows the researcher to summarize key features of a large data set as it requires a well-structured process to handle the data to give a clear and organized report (King, 2011).

3.4.2 Thematic data analysis

As I mentioned in the previous section, thematic analysis tends to find patterns (themes) of meaning which will be the essence of the analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis shares some characteristics of other qualitative research. Braun and Clarke introduce six thematic analysis steps that will be the compass of my data analysis. However, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase process is a “logical sequential order” (Byrne, 2021, p. 7), and hence my thematic analysis is not a linear process that moves forward through the steps. My analysis is recursive and iterative, so I move back and forth through the phases as required. I consider the phases as a guideline rather than rules to navigate the different phases in a flexible manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021).

3.4.2.1 *Familiarizing with the data*

In this phase, I transcribed the focus group interview and imported an excel file for the semi-structured survey on NVivo. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), transcription is essential for a systematic analysis. The transcription and reading of the responses from the survey made me familiar with the depth and breadth of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this initial phase, I started to take notes about some interesting data I found in the data material, like “Good written feedback would help me

improve and see issues I had missed or told me how I did good. Bad written feedback would tell me nothing of the reason I did good or bad”. I have made a list of data that I found interesting and repeated at first glance. Marking ideas is the essence of coding to make them more vivid later while working more with coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021).

3.4.2.2 *Generating initial codes*

After I started to familiarize myself with the data and have a general idea and a list of interesting data, I began to have initial codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My goal in this step is to organize my data into meaningful groups. I tried to give equal attention to each data item to identify interesting aspects in the data items (a repeated pattern/ themes). Coding on NVivo allowed me to categorize interesting codes and narrow these codes. This phase aimed to collect as many variables as possible for finding potential themes. Some data extracts were not coded due to irrelevance. However, other extracts were coded once, and even other extracts were coded in different categories. For example, a participant's response on what to expect from written feedback boosts his/her motivation (see Table 3).

Table 3

Data extract with codes applied

Data extract	Coded for
I expect both positive comments but also some constructive comments, on how my English writing can get even better	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constructive criticism 2. Balanced feedback 3. Improvement

The participant in this response assures the importance of constructive (critical) and positive comments to boost motivation and improve English writing skills. It is essential to mention that I coded both the survey and the focus group into the same categories as a combination because the same open-ended questions were used in both methods. My coding process was data-driven and theory-driven, which means that the process was inductive and deductive. Before starting to search for the themes within the coded data, I began to notice some dominant patterns. In the following figure (Figure 3), I show the process of the coded data using NVivo.

Figure 3

Coded data on NVivo

<input type="radio"/> Mix of oral and written feedback	1	4
<input type="radio"/> Negative vs constructive	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Oral feedback	1	5
<input type="radio"/> Postive perception of negative written fee	1	4
<input type="radio"/> Role of written feedback in improvment	1	4
<input type="radio"/> Aim to improve regardless of the type	1	5
<input type="radio"/> Critical feedback improves English writ	1	6
<input type="radio"/> Students' perception to critical and positiv	2	48
<input type="radio"/> Confidence	1	7
<input type="radio"/> Impact of grades	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Impact of negative comments	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Impact of positive comments	1	2
<input type="radio"/> Teachers role	1	3
<input type="radio"/> Constructive criticism	2	9
<input type="radio"/> Formative vs summative feedback	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Grammar correction	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Honesty	1	5
<input type="radio"/> Dishonesty in giving written feedb	1	1
<input type="radio"/> Honest in a proper way	1	1

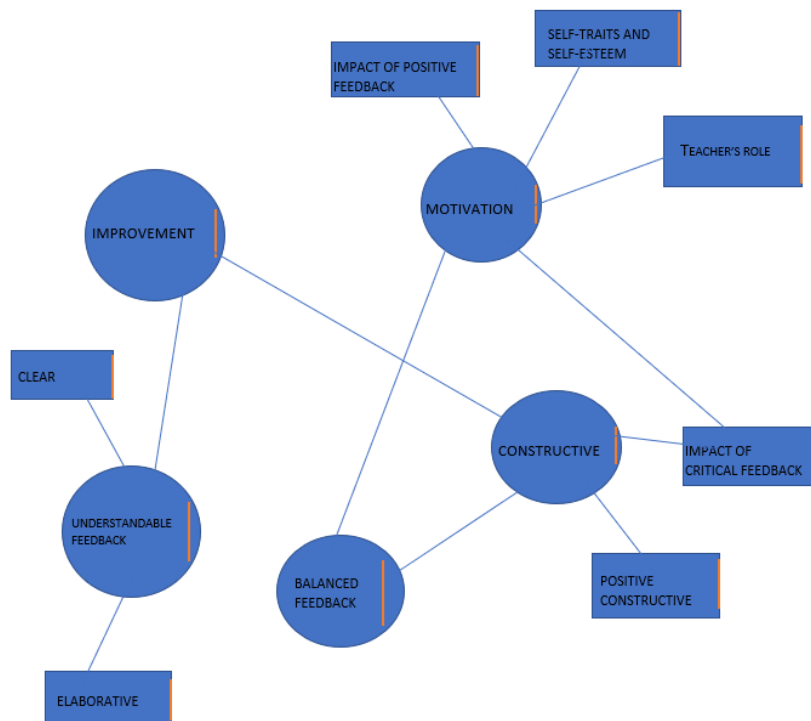
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Improvement	1	1
	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical feedback	1	2
	<input type="radio"/> Critical constructive feedback	1	1
	<input type="radio"/> Negative Vs constructive	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Positive and critical feedback	2	22
	<input type="radio"/> balancing between positive and cr	2	10
	<input type="radio"/> Mixing critical with positive feedb	1	6
	<input type="radio"/> negative and positive comments	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> self-traits	1	3
	<input type="radio"/> self-esteem	1	1
	<input type="radio"/> Reaction to teacher's dishonesty and r	1	2
	<input type="radio"/> Relationship with the teacher	1	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> relevance of written feedback	1	8
	<input type="radio"/> Combining oral with written feeda	1	4
	<input type="radio"/> Irrelevant	1	2
	<input type="radio"/> Relevant	1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> Understandable feedback	1	16
	<input type="radio"/> Clarity	1	8
	<input type="radio"/> Connecting clarity with elaboratio	1	2
	<input type="radio"/> Elaborative feedback	1	3
<input type="radio"/>	Teacher must be sincere	1	1
<input type="radio"/>	Written feedback	1	5
<input type="radio"/>	Written feedback impact on motivation	1	17
	<input type="radio"/> Aim to improve regardless of written f	1	3
	<input type="radio"/> Constructive feedback needs appropri	1	1
	<input type="radio"/> Demotivation of critical comments	1	5
	<input type="radio"/> Has no impact on motivation	1	2
	<input type="radio"/> Should include positive elements to	1	6

3.4.2.3 Searching for themes

After initially coding all the data, I have a list of different codes to be recognized across the data set (Figure 4). Searching for themes is when I started to sort my themes into groups to identify the themes. At this point, I began to analyze the different codes and combine them into thematic categories to make sense of them. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the best way to sort the codes into different themes is to create a visual presentation. Hence, a mind-map will be optimal to show the theme piles, which will make it easier to see the connections between the themes, and thus I can sense the patterns within this thematic map. In the following thematic map, I will show the initial main themes that emerged from looking into the different coded data in NVivo. This illustration aims to show the other relationship “between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89).

Figure 4

Initial thematic map, showing five main themes



Five themes have emerged from the initial thematic map (Figure 4.1). These themes are motivation, improvement, constructive (feedback), balanced feedback, and understandable feedback. As we can notice, there is an interrelationship between these themes and sub-themes. For instance, the coded data show that balanced feedback requires both constructive and motivational elements. Constructive, in this case, is a set of critical feedback that allows the students to improve, and positive feedback points out what they have done correctly and makes them aware of their strengths. In addition, positive comments motivate them to continue writing. Improvement is basically related to understandable and constructive feedback.

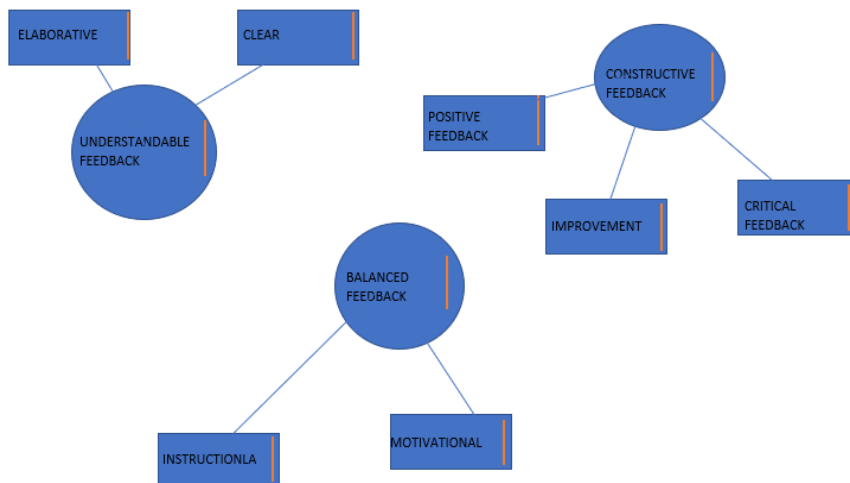
3.4.2.4 Reviewing themes

Many themes have emerged after creating the thematic maps to generate candidate patterns. At this stage, some candidate themes might or might not be eliminated depending on the presence or lack of data and coherence that support them, while other themes might merge to create one theme. My candidate themes form a coherent pattern as a starting point toward identifying solid themes. Clarity and consistency are required to find distinctions between themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), reviewing the themes has two steps to determine whether they “capture the contours of the data set” (p. 91) within the coded data and the whole data set. Hence, I first checked that the themes cohere together with the coded data. Secondly, I checked that the themes were valid within the whole data set by reading the data set. This step aims to reflect meaningful evidence and give an accurate representation. After reviewing the entire data set, I found that the themes and my theoretical and analytic approach are coherent with the entire data set.

After refining my themes using the two steps reviewing, some initial themes were held as main themes, whereas others merged with other main themes as sub-themes. At this point, I start to sense some significance of individual patterns that shape the interest in my study. In the following developed/final thematic map, I will show my progressive and final thematic map (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

The developed and final thematic map showing three main themes



Braun and Clarke (2006) determine three thematic map processes initial, developed, and final. However, in my case, two thematic maps were sufficient to show that three main themes held as central themes. I refined these three themes from the initial thematic map. Some sub-themes like teacher’s role and self-esteem were eliminated. Other main themes were merged under different main themes as sub-themes; for example, I sub-themed *motivation* under *balanced feedback* and *improvement* under *constructive feedback*. Figure 4.2 shows the three themes illustrated as the main themes.

3.4.2.5 Defining and naming themes

In this step, consistent and coherent themes are vital. After I made a satisfying final thematic map, I ensured the coherence of these themes that showed organized and logical themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), refining and defining these patterns is essential. As I mentioned earlier, the refined part ensures coherence and an internally consistent account of the patterns. I returned to the data extracts for refinement to ensure that themes were organized coherently and consistently without any complications and scatteration. Themes identification required reviewing the data material to determine the relevance of these themes in relation to the entire data set. It is also essential to define and identify every theme within my research question. My research question is, *how do students perceive teachers' written feedback on their English writing in a Norwegian upper secondary school general studies 11th grade (VG1) classroom?* Considering other factors like English as a foreign language in Norwegian high school classroom (eleventh grade). The data set shows that the students had some common perspectives regarding the English written feedback engaging their experience to some extent. According to the generated themes, the students value some factors when given written English feedback.

The first theme is *understandable feedback*, which shows the importance of an adequate understanding of English written feedback. Many questions can be related to this theme, like what does this mean? How can I interpret this? And so on. Ambiguity leads to confusion, and hence the feedback might lose its value and become useless. Understandable feedback requires to be clear and elaborative. The students demand to understand the feedback through clarity, a sub-theme (e.g., explicit language, straightforward language, and consistency). Elaboration is required to let the students know how to adjust, revise, and enhance the current and future written product. The students without proper feedback that does not contain useful information to alter their writing proficiency might lose the whole point of this process. Elaboration may include examples, a plan for further work, or an explanation. Another theme to identify and define is *constructive feedback* which aims to advance students' writing through effective written feedback. Constructive gives the students the insight to upgrade their ability to identify, recognize, and avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Improvement is one of the sub-themes of constructive feedback because, without improvement, we cannot call feedback constructive. It needs to let the students recognize what to enhance in their text and what to keep doing. In this respect, *positive and critical* feedback is vital because positive feedback informs the students about the excellence they made and should continue doing. In this case, positive feedback is not merely a motivation-boosting tool; it is also a constructive tool. At the same time, critical feedback points out errors, mistakes, irrelevance, or unclearness and gives *suggestions* for enhancements. *Balanced feedback* is the third theme to recognize throughout the data set and coded data. Balanced feedback means the existence of both positive and critical (negative) feedback. Balanced feedback functions as motivational and informative at the same time by giving both informative and motivational elements, and thus, feedback becomes more satisfying for the students. Informative is linked to constructing and improving while, on the other hand, motivational (positive) boosts motivation to continue writing. Hence, the feedback needs to be balanced because too much criticism might lead to demotivation, and too much positive feedback might lead to a lack of understanding.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity seeks to answer the question, "How will we know that the conclusions are valid?" (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 121-122). Even though validity and reliability are a key concern in qualitative and quantitative research in collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting the findings (Merriam, 2009), the term validity has a different approach in qualitative and quantitative research (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). While quantitative research deals with statistics, variables, and objectively testing the hypothesis

(Merriam, 2009), qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with the trustworthiness and straightforward process of the research (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, data is constructed from the participants' view of the world; hence, validity is relative because "it has to be assessed in relation to the purpose and circumstances of the research" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 121). Therefore, two threats can affect the qualitative research quality such as researcher bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2013).

According to Maxwell, research bias can be understood as: the researcher's interference in selecting data that fits the researcher's existing theory and goals and selecting the data that support the researcher's point of view might affect the research quality to be influenced by biases. However, it is impossible to eliminate the researcher's beliefs and theories in qualitative research. Therefore, validity is a matter of integrity in showing how a particular researcher's beliefs and expectations may influence the study's conduct and conclusions. (Maxwell, 2013)

Moreover, Maxwell writes that reactivity is "the influence of the researcher on the settings or individuals studied, generally known as "reactivity" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). In this respect, reactivity in conducting my survey was much less than in the interview because I was absent when the survey was conducted. On the other hand, my influence on the individuals studied in the interview might be powerful because of the semi-structured nature of the interview. My interferences in the interview might alter the participants' responses depending on my beliefs. Again, it is impossible to eliminate the researcher's influence in qualitative research. However, the main goal is to understand how I influenced the informants' responses.

The essence of validity in qualitative research is to increase the credibility of the findings. In this regard, I tried to incorporate two methods to find crossing points between the survey and the interview methods. Even though the same open-ended questions were applied to both methods and the same participants' group, the survey served as an entry for the whole group to be answered individually. On the other hand, the interview was more focused on avoiding misinterpreting the respondents' meanings (Maxwell, 2013). Through the focus group sample, I tried to identify my biases and misunderstandings of the generated data in the survey by asking further questions to reveal their true meanings. In this case, respondent validation and comparison among the participants and methods were my strategies for increasing the validity (Maxwell, 2013).

The word reliability "refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). However, reliability is problematic in the qualitative study because human experiences and behaviors are never static. In this respect, a single reality cannot exist in qualitative research because researchers usually try to explain and describe the world through those who experienced it. Therefore, findings in social science will never yield the same results. The concern here is not finding the results again, "but whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). This means that the findings must make sense within the collected data; they are consistent and dependable. In this respect, the main aim to ensure the reliability of research is to show consistency and dependability, for example, through methods triangulation (using various methods), peer examination, and investigator's position (Merriam, 2009).

3.7 Generalizability

The term refers to the ability to apply a study to other situations, settings, and people (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, generalization is arguably difficult to attain because of the uniqueness of qualitative research. However, general resides in the particular which some elements of qualitative research can be sought by whom finds it useful to his/her situation. For example, other similar studies can benefit from the relevant elements in my study concerning feedback, written feedback, students' perceptions, etc. Transferability is the more correct concept for qualitative study because knowledge is accumulated to construct a meaning (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research adds knowledge to the collective knowledge, making it extrapolation. For example, people who have the same interest in written feedback might find this research beneficial to gain new knowledge, compare, contrast, and so on.

3.8 Results

In the previous sections, I showed the process of analyzing, searching for themes, reviewing, refining, and defining these themes. In addition, I discussed the ethics that govern qualitative research. The next step is to introduce these themes concerning the data extracts. Three themes have emerged from this process understandable feedback, balanced feedback, and constructive feedback. This section aims to list these three themes to be discussed later.

3.8.1 Understandable feedback

Understandable feedback is one of the major themes this study has found to be the most important element that the students appreciate most when given feedback. Student #3 (interview) stated that the teacher's feedback comments should be understandable by saying, "They need to be understandable and make them clear and easy to understand." This student from the interview stressed the significance of understandable written comments in the feedback. Easy language is favorable when writing English written feedback. Other students from the interview (student #4) agreed with this statement as he said, "The teacher has to make it easy and understandable." The third student explained why it is essential to give understandable feedback by saying, "It saves both students and teachers time if teachers present understandable and easy feedback." Easy feedback in this context is meant to write the comments (feedback) in an understandable and easy language. Student #1 explained further why it is essential to get understandable feedback after asking them what they think about this comment "Revise all subject-verb agreement in your paper." Here, student #1 replied:

I don't understand the specific term. I will not have a clue. I will not know what to do then. I would say I will skip this because I don't understand it. Easy is better because when it's complicated, we cannot understand it.

I, as an interviewer, explained the term to them in the interview to have an insight into what a subject-verb agreement means that he, she, and it take s in simple present and so on. The first student was satisfied with the explanation because she could understand the term and commented:

"In this way, it becomes easy to understand. It was way more complicated than it's intended to be. That is a bad feedback, I would say."

According to this student, bad feedback is related to ambiguous or complicated feedback by using complicated language/terms (revise all subject-verb agreement) because it would lead to skipping the

feedback due to the lack of understanding. However, student #2 suggested that the problem is not with the comment itself (Revise all subject-verb agreement in your paper). Rather, the problem is in the lack of further explanation, which would make it easier for them to understand and acquire new terms by saying:

It wouldn't matter if you say revise all subject-verb agreement, but you should put *slash (/)* to explain what this means

This student tried to say that it is good to mention the term subject-verb agreement; however, the teacher should explain further what it means in simpler words or by giving examples, such as (He, she, and it take S in the simple present). "A win-win!" the third student stated to understand and acquire new knowledge. Student #23 from the survey perceived feedback as negative "if the feedback is written in a complicated mean way." Here the feedback has become a negative experience for the student if the feedback is complicated and hard to understand. Another student, #16, finds "unclear" feedback unpleasant because it would affect their grades.

Clear language is a request by student #22, who commented that:

"I think the teacher who are giving me feedback need to give you a language that are understandable for me" because, according to this student #23, the teacher "need to explain why you have given me the feedback you gave me."

An understandable language is vital for this participant. However, it must be a language that is understandable for individual students. Thus, the language used to provide feedback for one student might be challenging or too easy for another. It here appears that the teacher's role is vital in adjusting and adapting the language to match the students' language level. The sole aim is to enforce the student's revising ability to understand the feedback content. To confirm this proposition, students #2 and #5 (interview) stated that written commentaries "need to be understandable and make them clear and easy to understand" and "the teacher should avoid complicated words that we do not understand and talk in our language."

These different examples show that *clear* and understandable feedback is crucial for many students to perceive the feedback as a meaningful tool to point out the linguistic and content mistakes and irrelevance. Feedback must be *clear* to allow the students to understand what they can do differently. The first student noted that the feedback must be explicit and specific to avoid ambiguity. This student's point of view about "How would you define bad English written feedback?" is related to the lack of specific and explicit feedback by saying:

If it is too general, like "you have a lot of grammar fails" or "you do grammar wrong."
Where I did wrong? "your sentence is too long" where? You need to be more specific."

Thus, poorly written feedback is related to generalizing when given unspecified and unexplicit information to make the student unaware of the required provided feedback to understand. For example, "you need to pay close attention to correct capitalization use." This comment is too general that might confuse the students and hinder their ability to locate the error in their text. The remediation for this is to find the capitalization error and explain why it must be capitalized.

Elaborative feedback is vital for the students to make the feedback more understandable. It was pointed out that:

Specifically, with grammar errors, the teacher should give examples like a sentence where you use was, an example where you use were. It makes it easier to the student to understand because the student would do the same mistake in the exam too. (Student #3, interview)

So, the student is asking for the teacher to give examples or create “models” for the student to review, imitate, and apply in his/her own writing as a form of writing scaffold. The concern here is to make the same error in the future because of the lack of examples. The first student agreed that unexemplified feedback would disable the students from knowing how they can understand and correct these errors. The first student answered a question I asked in the interview about elaboration and giving examples when getting written feedback. Her answer was:

Because if you see or get your text back, and you just see a red mark at one word, and you think that is wrong, that's the reason why I get this grade. You can just see the wrong and nothing that you can take with to the next step. (Student #1, interview)

Examples and elaborative feedback are essential for formative feedback and not merely summative one. To have effective written feedback requires from the teacher to explain the reasoning behind the feedback. I asked the focus group, “what would you like to include in the feedback to make it more useful for you?” both the third and the fourth students assured the significance of examples to have helpful feedback. The third student stated:

Just example what you could do better. Constructive as she said, and as much useful information that you can use in the future or the next text or just in general. (Student #3, interview)

Student #4 agreed and stated: “Actual examples from the text can help you.”

Elaborative and exemplified comments are the reference for future development in the academic and practical contexts. The participants were trying to convey the importance of transferring the teacher’s knowledge to their linguistic inventory.

3.8.2 Balanced feedback

Balanced feedback has been shown across the data set as an important topic that the students value getting when they are provided with written feedback. One of the students (4, survey) linked motivation to getting both critical and positive feedback. In his opinion, feedback should “focus on what I need to improve, but also on what I am good at.” Another student (#9, survey) assured that the feedback should contain both positive and critical elements when asked about the importance of critical comments, “Sometimes, you have to look at the positives and the negatives.” In other words, the teachers’ written feedback needs to be balanced with critical and constructive elements, not only focus on either one or the other. Furthermore, one student (#19, survey) also perceived critical feedback as an essential way to grow as a writer as long as it is accompanied by positive feedback. Meanwhile, another student (#10, survey) elaborated on the significance of having both positive and critical feedback by saying:

I would like that the teacher focus on both negative and positive feedback, so I am aware of what I'm good at too. I would also like that the teacher rather explain what I could have done different to make it better than to just state the things I did bad.

Student #2 from the interview conveyed the same idea when he was asked what to expect from written English feedback to boost his motivation. He replied that:

I think that they could focus on both sides and not just negative so they point out on what to improve and what you should keep doing like some talent special thing you are pretty good at so you can keep that in mind in your text and your write.

The reasoning behind both positive and negative is to pinpoint the excellence and suggest what could have been done differently. Even though these responses can fit all the themes, I decided to include them in balanced feedback because it provides a good argument for why the feedback should contain both critical and positive elements. When thinking about *balanced feedback, instructional and motivational* factors are connected to these two replies. Hence, "Critical feedback is necessary to learn, and the positive feedback should be there to boost your motivation." (Student, #4, interview). Therefore, "Good feedback cannot be only positive; it must include some critics." Student #4 continued his argument. Student #4 from the survey explained, "If I always get negative feedback I won't be motivated, but if I get a little of both I will concentrate better on improving." In this respect, this student would focus on improving if he/she gets some motivation.

Critical (negative) feedback can affect the students' confidence if positive comments do not accompany it. Student #16 from the survey replied, "It can affect my confidence in English writing if I only get negative comments, so you should always add a lot of positive ones too." In turn, if the students lose their confidence in writing in English then they will most likely lose their motivation to write and perform worse academically. Even though "positive feedbacks would boost my confidence much more than negative feedbacks will, but it is necessary to receive critical comments as well." Student #19 (survey) replied to stress the importance of including both positive and critical. In this respect, "the teacher needs to point out the positive aspects of the text, but also provide a reasonable amount of criticism that the teacher believes helps the student." (Student #24, survey). Furthermore, student #11 valued *balanced feedback* "because if I get too much bad feedback I will feel like there was nothing good about the test, but if I get only positive I will have nothing to improve on."

Balanced feedback can contain both positive and critical constructive feedback, according to student #2 from the interview. However, to this student, it is essential to have both constructive factors in the feedback because:

"People get upset and angry at themselves when they only get constructive negative feedback and not constructive positive feedback, so they think the rest is destructive feedback, so it is important to know their students and give different type of feedback for every student even though it is kind of hard, but I think it would improve the students writing after that." (student #2, interview)

This student was trying to say that feedback might be destructive if it contains only constructive negative feedback depending on the student. It is safer to make the feedback more balanced between both negative and positive feedback to suit different levels of confidence among students to improve.

3.8.2 Constructive feedback

Critical feedback is the third theme I found in the data analysis. The students perceive constructive feedback as a way of *improvement* through *critical* and *positive* feedback. The aim here is to allow the students to enhance their English writing and point out the excellence and faults in their writing. Student #10 replied that feedback should “focus on what I need to improve, but also on what I am good at.” Here, both critical and positive feedback is received as constructive to improve the students’ experience with affective feedback. Furthermore, one participant stressed that:

“Good written feedback would help me improve and see issues I had missed, or told me how I did good. Bad written feedback would tell me nothing of the reason I did good or bad.” (student #14, survey)

This student connected good and bad feedback to be well constructed. The feedback is good when it helps the students to improve their writing (constructive); on the contrary, it is bad feedback when no improvement has taken place. Constructive feedback is important to student #16 because “you can’t get better if you don’t know what needs improving.” Moreover, the lack of constructive feedback, according to student #16, can be frustrating:

“It is also annoying when you get a bad grade but the teacher only gives you 2 sentences of negative feedback, because I can’t improve if I barely get to know what to improve on”

Feedback must be constructive and informative to enhance the students’ English writing proficiencies and thus improve their grades. A good grade is a goal, for student #18 to get constructive feedback. This student expressed his/her opinion about the necessity of critical feedback: “yes absolutely, i think its very important to show the student what they can do better to get a better grade.”

Additionally, student # 17 stressed that “to get better I need to know what I can do better. Then I can use the information when writing another text.” In this respect, there is a direct link between effective feedback and constructive feedback, considering the formative nature of constructive feedback in improvement. “You learn by your mistakes,” student #20 commented on the functionality of critical feedback. Constructive feedback provides the students with the needed information to improve their future English writing. However, student #24 shed light on the teachers’ role in adjusting their critical feedback according to the students’ level by stating:

“Yes, you do need critics to some degree to actually improve, but the amount should be considered by the teacher of how much he or she thinks the student can improve.”

Improvement is essential in learning, as student #1 (interview) replied on the significance of critical feedback in enhancing English writing:

“Yes, of course, like if you do not get constructive feedback how would you know what you did wrong and what can you improve to the next text, so I think it is one of the most important things about English learning.”

From this participant's point of view, constructive feedback is not only merely a valuable tool to enhance English learning; it is essential and a core element in English learning improvement. Furthermore,

student #3 (interview) stressed that useful feedback is a constructive one that contains helpful information for future reference:

“Constructive as she said, and as much useful information that you can use in the future, or the next text, or just in general.”

The teacher must be critical in giving feedback “because you need to be constructive. “You do not have to be afraid of hurting the student. You just get a feedback you get a bad grade then you ask why,” as student #1 (interview) pointed out to make the students aware of their English writing level. Feedback must contain constructive and critical information that students can benefit from in the future to enhance their English writing proficiency and thus their grades. However, “the feedback goal should help the students to improve not to criticize” (student #4, interview)

4 Discussion

This study aimed to capture the students' perspective on English written feedback. Hence, a semi-structured survey and focus interview were implemented to investigate students' perceptions of different angles of written feedback. In this view, this study aims to provide knowledge about how students perceive English written feedback in the Norwegian eleventh-grade classroom as a foreign language.

Three findings have emerged (understandable feedback, balanced feedback, and constructive feedback) to shed light on students' most valuable aspects that feedback must contain to be effective. The findings reflect the participants' perceptions of English written feedback to express their interest in the different functionalities of written feedback. Understandable feedback is the first finding where the participants stressed the importance of clear and elaborative feedback when provided with one. Balanced feedback is another finding in this study to show that the students need a balance between critical and positive feedback to make them aware of their mistakes and empower their strengths in writing without losing motivation or confidence. The last finding in this study is constructive feedback, where the participants expressed the significance of critical information to point out the faults and flaws in their writing and enhance their compositions accordingly.

This chapter will discuss these three findings in relation to previous research and studies to answer my research question: How do students perceive teachers' written feedback on their English writing in a Norwegian eleventh-grade classroom? In this respect, I will explain and interpret the findings of this study in the light of different previous ones.

4.1 Understandable feedback

The findings show that the participants value understandable feedback as one of the main themes in written English feedback. Feedback is essential for students to make accurate changes in their writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a) through direct and concise feedback to correct their errors (Ferris, 2006). Thus, this suggests that students depend on feedback to modify their writing and be able to self-correct. In this view, "the teacher has to make it easy and understandable" (student, #4). Feedback is a means to facilitate students' writing in the short and long term, and hence feedback is related to "instructions" when it is related to second language learners (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). In this respect, students must be able to understand the received instructions to self-correct. Hyland and Hyland (2001; 2006b) stress that the teacher's feedback must ensure the students' ability to interpret the teacher's comments effectively because it "need to explain why you have given me the feedback you gave me" (student #24). In this case, effectiveness is entwined with interpretation; the more students can interpret the feedback, the more effective it will be. In this view, Gamlem and Smith (2013, p. 152) point out that "feedback leads to learning gains only when it includes guidance about how to improve, when students have opportunities to apply the feedback, understand how to use it."

Feedback is not merely marking students' texts or giving insufficient information; the feedback should be contextualized (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). The students strive to get elaborative information to understand and make sense of the input. For instance, one student commented that the feedback loses its value if it is too general. Therefore, students need to know the reasoning behind the given feedback to be effective.

The argument in this section is trying to shed light on the students' perceptions and preferences of English written feedback through their previous experiences. Hence the main focus was on the students' perspectives. However, previous studies show that there are more factors to consider in the process. For instance, a statement "Talk in our language" from one of the students when receiving feedback implies that the teacher should adjust and adapt to one's students when giving feedback. Accordingly, feedback becomes "a productive interpersonal relationship between the teacher and individual students" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a, p. 86). Creating an interpersonal relationship is essential when providing feedback because it directly addresses the individual student composition and allows the teachers to track the personal development through feedback. The feedback becomes more transparent and more understandable when students get explicit information. I noticed from the students' replies in the data set that some students' linguistic level varies from one student to another. Thus, teachers should tailor their feedback according to the students' backgrounds and needs (Ferris et al., 1997), creating sociocultural perspectives on learning to construct feedback through interactive processes (Murphy, 2000).

Understandable feedback is relative to individual students; student #23 stated that the feedback is negative "if the feedback is written in a complicated mean way." Here, one asks oneself: What is complicated? Is it challenging for this student, or is it difficult for the majority of the classroom? The teacher, in this case, should be entitled to know what is complicated for this particular student and construct feedback accordingly. Reid (1994) stresses the importance of *clear* direction for L2 writers through the interventions of teachers' comments to respond to the students' goals and purposes. Clear direction is a keyword here to emphasize the significance of providing the student with clear feedback that can advance their knowledge.

Furthermore, what Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996, p. 295) consider perceiving feedback as "useful" varies considerably according to "educational context and students' level of literacy." Hence, feedback should address the students' goals and purposes, and the teacher should formulate their feedback to facilitate students' learning within the educational goals. For example, teachers might focus on the content in the students' compositions more than the linguistics to fit the educational purposes, which might confuse the students who expect more feedback on the form. Moreover, Lee (2008a) found that teachers might find it challenging to give elaborative input on the students' compositions because if there are too many language problems, the teacher will not be able to respond to the content. Several participants in this study stated that providing examples in the feedback help them to understand the feedback; however, the teachers might not find the capacity to address all form and content errors and fluency elaboratively. One teacher in Lee' (2008a) study stated that it is required to follow the educational policy in providing comprehensive error feedback. Lee found that most of the teachers in his study have doubts about "comprehensive feedback." They argue that intensive feedback (providing feedback on every error) is overwhelming for teachers and weaker students because low-achieving students will not cope with this amount of feedback. Selective feedback is favorable because it enables the teachers to systematically select what feedback should provide. On the contrary, Montgomery and Baker (2007) found that the teachers gave more feedback to the low-performing students because they felt that more vulnerable students needed more help.

Even though the participants in this study require the feedback to be elaborative and straightforward, more variables can interfere with this process. As a researcher involved in an English didactics program, I find that there is no substantial education on providing effective written English feedback. Lack of teacher training in the area of feedback might make the teachers unaware of the proper feedback practices. In this respect, feedback is highly dependable on the teachers' beliefs and backgrounds. For example, the teachers in Lee's (2008b) study stressed the importance of providing a detailed response to the students' writing even though the school and competence aims suggest that the students should learn to correct and locate the errors in their writing (Lee, 2008a) which contradicts with this study's results. This study suggests that teachers must be clear and elaborative in providing written feedback. Yet, it is also difficult to draw general conclusions and generalize findings with limited data and methods.

In addition, the results of Lee's study demonstrate that the teachers' beliefs mismatch with reality. EFL students need feedback that locates and corrects the errors clearly and elaboratively because the students are unable to decipher error codes (Lee, 2008a). Teachers believe that self-correction is beneficial in advancing the students' learning, but the ability to do that might be limited and might cause frustration to the low-performing students (Lee, 2008a). One of the teachers felt the urge to provide elaborative feedback because this teacher feels responsible for the students (Lee, 2008b). We can understand that the teachers' field experience altered their beliefs and values to develop the students' writing proficiencies through learning by doing (self-correct). Hence, the evidence shows that the teachers try to identify and correct the errors because the teachers are accountable to their students (Lee, 2008b). However, Ferris et al. (1997, p. 177) found that the "teacher should systematically decrease the amount of feedback given during a writing course to help students develop as independent self-editor." As a substitute teacher, I can relate to this argument about the significance of providing satisfying (clear and elaborative) feedback because it can empower the student's ability to revise and acquire new knowledge. Ferris et al.'s (1997) findings do not necessarily contradict the students' preferences in this study. Their knowledge would expand, giving the teachers more space to systematically adjust their feedback to advance the students' writing.

Marking the students' errors or giving error codes like "revise all subject-verb agreement" might impair the students' learning, as student #1 (interview) expressed:

"I don't understand the specific term. I will not have a clue. I will not know what to do then. I would say I will skip this because I don't understand it. Easy is better because when it's complicated, we cannot understand it."

For example, a participant in Hyland's (2003) study seemed confused about the teacher's feedback when asked to work on the articles in her text. She expressed that she might make the same mistake again because her teacher was not concise. Furthermore, Ferris et al. (1997) commented that EFL writers might have difficulties coping with teacher feedback that is vague or unclear. For example, general feedback is vague to students, and it matches this study's participant's statement:

If it is too general, like "you have a lot of grammar fails" or "you do grammar wrong."
Where I did wrong? "your sentence is too long" where? You need to be more specific."

Hence, statements like “Address content before form” and “Use questions rather than statements or imperative” can for low-achieving students be confusing and “does not address the issues of how to determine the most important issues or problems in a student’s paper” (Ferris et al., 1997, p. 176). Moreover, the results in this study match Hyland’s participant reaction about the lack of explanation “specifically, with grammar errors, the teacher should give examples” (student #3, interview). For example, most of the participants in the preparatory pre-college year in Alshahrani and Storch’s (2014) study preferred to receive comprehensive written feedback because it makes them aware of all the errors they made and prevents fossilizing wrong information. For EFL students, there is a need for “immediate identification of the correct form and also the certainty of the correct answer” (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014, p. 112). The participants in my study showed the same level of interest and preferences to be provided with clear and comprehensive feedback. Effective feedback is related to the offered information enabling the writer to progress and proceed with the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Hence, directive instruction and clarification feedback in Leng’s (2014) study were the most favorable for the participants because they needed a sense of direction (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). In line with my study, a similarity is noticeable to underline the importance of these factors. In this view, explicit comments save the students from making the same mistake by telling in clear and specific terms and sharing the teacher knowledge about effective writing (Leng, 2014, as cited from Ogede, 2002). Several participants accentuated that to be effective, feedback must be understood. Teacher knowledge can enrich the students’ ability to revise and benefit from all the presented knowledge; they strive to get clarified information. For example, Hyland and Hyland (2006a) state that feedback should be saturated with information for improvement to take place. “They need to be understandable and make them clear and easy to understand” is a statement that captured the student’s #3 (interview) preference when receiving feedback. Blanton (1987) explains that an effective revision depends on students’ understandable and accessible feedback.

“Need to explain why you have given me the feedback you gave me” (Student, #24) is a comment which was explained in Hyland’s (1998) case study to study the impact of teacher’s feedback on the student revision ability. The participant could revise and adjust her grammatical error; however, she could not understand why the change had to be made. Even though students are willing to enhance their composition, this study shows that the students value the explained feedback they have got to enrich their knowledge instead of imitating the teacher’s direct correction. For example, the teacher can suggest inserting an example to make it easier for the reader to understand the conveyed meaning. The findings in this study highly indicate the significance of further explanation in the form of exemplification and simplification of the knowledge introduced in the feedback. Some proportion of Ferris’s (1995) participants were unsatisfied with the teacher’s input because they found difficulties interpreting the teacher’s feedback about specific grammar terms and indicator symbols (abbreviations, arrows, and circles). Several students, Ferris stated, were confused by the teacher’s comments on the content when they were too general or too specific. As I have mentioned before, students’ backgrounds and beliefs might mismatch the teacher’s background and ideas so a clash can happen between these factors. For example, a student who prefers to write in the British English style might face some critics from a teacher whose style is American (Ferris, 1995). The consequence of such conflict might radiate to become an unpleasant interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the students.

The discussion in this section tried to discuss *understandable feedback* from different angles. Clearly, the participants’ perceptions of English written feedback valued clear and elaborative feedback for making

them aware of their writing issues. Understandable feedback enforces the students' revised ability to enhance their compositions and develop their writing proficiencies. However, regardless of the students' preference for getting coherent feedback, many factors can play a role in this process. The most prominent elements are teachers' and students' backgrounds and beliefs, which can alter feedback provision and response. Hence, teachers should consider the students' needs and experiences when providing written feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

4.2 Balanced feedback

Another finding in this study is balanced feedback. The participants showed their interest in getting balanced feedback which should consist of critical and positive elements to develop their writing and motivate them to continue writing. Even though the feedback is vital to provide information and facilitate improvement (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994), Hyland and Hyland (2001, p. 186) believe that feedback must contain praise to "reinforce appropriate language behaviours and foster students' self-esteem." Student #2 (interview) showed this idea clearly when he commented that:

People get upset and angry at themselves when they only get constructive negative feedback and not constructive positive feedback, so they think the rest is destructive feedback. So, it is important to know their students and give different type of feedback for every student even though it is kind of hard, but I think it would improve the students writing after that.

This student believes that constructive feedback (critical) can turn into destructive when it is not accompanied by praising or positive feedback. Connors and Lunsford (1993) raised this concern, who stated that too much criticism could damage the students' motivation and self-confidence as writers because writing is very personal. Knowing one's students is an interpersonal aspect that teachers should consider when giving written feedback because the goal of feedback is to help create a supportive teaching environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). In this regard, praising and criticism play an essential role in creating balanced feedback, especially to the weaker students or those with low self-esteem and motivation. In this respect, the teacher should aim to facilitate, evaluate, read, proofread, and encourage the writing (Reid, 1994). All these factors collaborate in the teacher's feedback to illuminate in a balanced way the faults and excellence in the students' written products. For instance, Student #4 (Survey) stated:

I think that they could focus on both sides and not just negative so they point out on what to improve and what you should keep doing like some talent, special thing you are pretty good at so you can keep that in mind in your text and your write.

Positive feedback, in this case, should be informative and credible to be effective because insincere praise might lose its value in encouraging good writing (Brophy, 1981). In this view, every feedback is implemented purposely to inform, develop, and encourage writing. Even though the participants in my study value encouraging comments, they expect to receive valuable and constructive information rather than platitudes (Ferris, 1995). Student #19 (survey) gave signals of the significance of both positive and critical feedback with the stress of the essence of crucial feedback in development:

"Positive feedbacks would boost my confidence much more than negative feedbacks will, but it is necessary to receive critical comments as well."

It is clear that this participant's response favors both positive and critical elements and stresses the significance of critical feedback to improve as a writer. Furthermore, praising feedback can productively enhance the student's experience and knowledge (Ferris, 1995). Hence, praising should perform beyond merely softening and mitigating the criticism; it should hold some meaning to be perceived as useful (Hyland & Hyland, 2001).

While all the participants of this study agreed on the significance of critical feedback to improve them as writers, the perception of positive feedback differs from one student to another. For example, student #4 (interview) commented that "critical feedback is necessary to learn, and the positive feedback should be there to boost your motivation." Praising here is connected directly to motivation because when one obtains positive feedback, one might feel triumph, and when one receives only critical feedback, one might feel failure (Hyland, 1998). On the other hand, some participants perceived positive feedback as a helpful tool for enhancing their writing (as seen in the other examples) (Ferris, 1995; Hyland & Hyland, 2001). In this respect, students' perceptions of critical and positive feedback are altered by the students' "experiences, levels, attitudes to writing, and the type of feedback they valued" (Hyland, 1998, p. 268). In this respect, Hattie and Timperley (2007) noted that praise serves as a motivator for learning; however, the students might be confused between praise and content feedback. For example, the teacher might comment on a specific part of the writing to be a model to follow in the student's composition. This type of feedback is critical in nature to advance the student's writing; however, the student can perceive this kind of feedback as praising. Moreover, Gamlem and Smith (2013) state that self-praising feedback precludes learning because it does not add any value to the feedback, while task-related praise might raise motivation, effort, and performance. I found it interesting that some participants in my study connected praising (positive feedback) on their writing to point out the excellence, and therefore it might increase their awareness of good writing, motivation to continue writing, and their performance in their future writing. Interestingly, in this case, praising functions as positive and critical simultaneously, rather than an empty praising or platitudes. Hence, Hattie and Timperley (2007) noted that feedback effectiveness decreases when only praise or punishment are provided.

Gamlem and Smith's (2013) study, which was also conducted in Norway, found that the students valued and favored positive feedback and condemned and bithered negative feedback. The positive feedback (in Gamlem and Smith's study) "gives approval of performance, achievement or effort and specifies what can be done to improve the work" (p. 159). In contrast, negative feedback was perceived as unfavorable when it criticized the students' products without adding any useful information (such as you could do better and work harder). In a similar fashion to that mention in the research literature, the participants in my study implicitly extend the concept of critical and positive feedback. They connected in particular critical (negative) and positive feedback with improvement and motivation, where both types of feedback function as positive according to Gamlem and Smith's study. It was illustrated clearly when student #2 (interview) mentioned *constructive negative feedback and constructive positive feedback*; hence, both types should be constructive. Therefore, the feedback should be effective either way; however, the balance is shown by marking what needs improvement and what excellence can be found. Thus, regardless of the interpersonal factors in perceiving positive and critical comments, the evidence indicates that both types of feedback are required to either enhance students' writing and pinpoint their weaknesses and strengths in writing or motivate and encourage them to continue writing.

However, Hyland (1998) warns that insincere praising that is not backed up with useful functionality might cause frustration, especially when the students receive low grades on their writing.

In this section, I discussed balanced feedback, one of the emerged themes. In line with other studies, this section demonstrates the significance of both critical and positive feedback. There was an agreement from several participants on the importance of critical feedback in development when it is constructive. On the other hand, some participants also valued positive feedback to inform them of the good writing production and motivate their efforts. Furthermore, some other participants expressed their need for positive feedback to encourage them without specifying whether positive feedback should be task-related or self-related praising. However, according to the results of the other participants and other studies, I assume that positive feedback was mainly appreciated when it was task-related.

4.3 Constructive criticism

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis is constructive criticism. The essence of written feedback and feedback, in general, is to provide a sequence of adequate instructions that would improve the learning (Wiliam, 2011). Hence, feedback is the core element of formative assessment and “usually defined in term of information about how successfully something has been or is being done” (Sadler, 1989, p. 120). In this respect, feedback must be constructive to narrow the gap between the current performance and the required reference level (Ramaprasad, 1983). Therefore, the feedback role is to improve the students’ proficiencies through the teachers’ interferences to alter their knowledge and enhance their future performance (Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989; Wiliam, 2011). Especially in the written feedback for EFL students, the feedback must be effective to improve students’ writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). This is depicted in one of the participants’ responses:

Good written feedback would help me improve and see issues I had missed, or told me how I did good.
Bad written feedback would tell me nothing of the reason I did good or bad. (Student #14, survey)

This statement is explained by Black and Wiliam (1998b), who consider feedback the main tool for development. The feedback is not feedback unless it contains the potential for improvement. Therefore, for successful feedback, teachers should construct written feedback that can facilitate the students’ writing development (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). I feel like “how I did good” here captures the essence of constructive feedback – *how* someone does something good (or *how* it can be improved).

Most of the participants of this study expressed their understanding of critical feedback as a way of developing their future writing, which was said by participant #3 (interview): “constructive as she said, and as much useful information that you can use in the future, or the next text, or just in general.” Hyland and Hyland (2006a) stress that L2 students expect to receive constructive criticism to help them identify problems and provide them with the needed knowledge.

The power of written feedback is illustrated by the ability to revise and enable the students to benefit from the feedback to enhance their current and future writing (Ferris, 1995; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). Therefore, written feedback must carry improvement elements to enhance the students’ revision experience. Constructive means informative and knowledge nourishing on the content and the linguistic levels to meet the students’ needs without containing unnecessary or not useful information (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a).

Even though the participants of this study linked criticism to being constructive in advancing their current and future writing, they did not provide a clear vision of what exactly is constructive criticism. The participants seemed to endeavor to convey the meaning of constructive criticism through the other factors they valued about how the teacher's feedback should address their writing products. On a larger scale, constructive feedback seems more complicated than the surface understanding of the participants' perceptions of effective feedback (Goldstein, 2004). Many factors can interfere with providing constructive criticism. At this point, as a researcher who is trying to find a meaning and a sense of the current and other studies, I feel obliged to expand our comprehension of each theme. Goldstein (2004) determined three factors to take into consideration when providing constructive feedback.

The first factor is the writing context which might affect the teachers' practices and the students' revision. For example, the written commentary might change according to the students' needs when the assignment's primary focus should be on the content and the rhetorical concerns. The teacher might feel pressured to give feedback on the grammatical and the lexical errors because, for instance, EFL students need more attention to the form regardless of the content's importance. Furthermore, school situations and requirements might impose some constraints (for example, word and length requirements and draft requirements), which involuntarily might shift the focus from the substantive aim. Hence, the teacher should mediate to address both form and content in the students' writing to have a consolation between the school policy and the students' level to construct helpful feedback. The teacher and students' communication is successful where helpful interventions are favored over appropriation (Reid, 1994). The teachers should communicate with the students to know their purpose of writing and try to help them achieve this purpose through helpful interventions. Therefore, the students need to state their intentions and point of view to help the teacher to give constructive feedback instead of altering the intended meaning by the students (appropriation). The problem is that the students are usually not present when providing written feedback. Therefore, the teachers might ask their students about the intended meaning and give helpful feedback accordingly, or the teacher can let the students write about their intentions, meaning, and purposes of a writing assignment beforehand to help the appropriate teacher feedback.

Furthermore, an interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the students is required because each individual perceives the teacher's commentary differently according to the individual abilities (Hyland, 1998). Hence, for constructive feedback, the teachers should consider the students' writing skills and their revision ability (This was discussed elaboratively in the *understandable feedback* section). A remedy for that is to teach the students about the commentary practices and the comments interpretation through systematic activities (Ferris, 1995; Reid, 1994) to make the students aware of what to expect—for example, by providing the students with the scoring rubrics to be able to understand the assessment process (Dyrdal, 2021). To maximize the effectiveness of written feedback, the teacher needs to understand and acknowledge the students' perceptions and preferences for feedback (Ferris, 1999).

The last factor is the shape of teachers' commentary, which raise the question: Where to begin? In this respect, the teacher should put some effort into knowing the areas where students need help by knowing their writing intentions. For example, the students at the school I am working at were asked to write an assignment about the abortion law in Norway. The students had to write about the law and give reasons either why they agree or why they disagree with it. With some students, it was difficult to determine their intentions or orientations; therefore, I had to ask them about their thoughts to provide

proper written feedback. Thus, written feedback might not fulfill its purpose until a deeper interaction occurs.

These factors along with the other themes that this study found, provide a better understanding of what constructive criticism is. This section was an attempt to provide an extended explanation of the constructive criticism definition that Hyland and Hyland (2001, p. 186) define as: “explicit recommendation for remediation, a relatively clear and accomplished action for improvement, which is sometimes referred to as “constructive criticism.” Written feedback aims to develop and enhance the students’ writing proficiencies constructively. Therefore, this section discussed the goals of constructive feedback and the factors that can contribute to improving or impairing the process of providing effective criticism.

5 Conclusion

The research question that I have attempted to answer in this thesis is: *How do students perceive teachers' written feedback on their English writing in a Norwegian upper secondary school general studies 11st-grade (VG1) classroom?* The main aim was to investigate the students' profound meanings of the different angles of effective written feedback. The collaboration of the various elements (previous research, students' experiences, and research flexibility) made it possible to have a deeper insight to extract meaningful points of view that can support our understanding of the students' perceptions. I endeavor throughout the study to avoid restrictions that can hinder or limit the potential to acquire knowledge about helpful written feedback from the participants. For this purpose, open-ended questions were implemented to provide the participants the freedom to express themselves thoroughly. Furthermore, a case study was the optimal methodology to maintain the flexibility of this research to collect all the evidence from the particular classroom. Even though it was bounded to one classroom, this study was interested in juxtaposing itself with other similar studies to find a broader meaning and give a better and sufficient understanding.

5.1 Summary of findings

This qualitative case study suggests that three themes were dominant in investigating the students' point of view through using open-ended questions (survey and interview). The first theme was *understandable feedback*, where the participants stressed their need for clarity and elaboration when given written feedback—the effectiveness of feedback is illustrated by the ability to revise it (Ferris, 1995) successfully. The data analysis captured and remarked the participants' need to understand the teacher's commentary feedback. Teachers are the primary source of information providers. Hence, the students are required to be able to decipher the teacher's comments. Complicated concepts and the lack of examples might hinder learning, especially in the EFL context. There is no doubt that several factors can interfere in providing and uncoding the teacher's commentary feedback, such as the students' and the teachers' beliefs and backgrounds, students' competencies, and the educational context. The interpersonal relationship between teacher and student may be vital to reducing inappropriate and vague feedback. In this respect, unclear feedback might be relative according to the multivarious variables. In my opinion, teachers might be burdened to customize their written feedback to achieve clear and effective feedback on a personal level. However, teachers can categorize their students from low-achieving students to high-achieving students to systematically address the linguistic and rhetorical skill levels. Moreover, teachers can encourage the students to give input on the input to have a glance at whether the feedback is clear and adequate or not.

The second theme was *balanced feedback* which implied the containment of both critical and positive elements to advance, maintain and encourage the students to continue writing. Most of the students valued and appreciated critical feedback due to its role in delivering the needed knowledge for “remediation” and enriching their writing skills and competencies. In comparison, positive feedback has motivational and sustainable functionality. Balanced feedback discussion led to opening more upon the meaning of critical (negative) and praising (positive). Students' perceptions of critical feedback in this study match the goal of feedback in improving and narrowing the gap between the current and the required level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a). In line with critical feedback, positive feedback should be included to make the students aware of their strengths and

motivate their writing efforts. Compared to another study (Gamlem & Smith, 2013), critical and praising feedback is considered positive in enforcing the students learning.

On the other hand, feedback was negative when it was self-related and insincere. In this respect, the students valued the balance between the effective elements of feedback, critical and positive, that can advance their learning. In other words, teachers should include and moderate their feedback practices to contain text-related critical and positive input.

The last theme was constructive criticism to show how someone can enhance through effective feedback. In this view, this theme was stressed in the data set by the students' perspectives on the core aim of written feedback. I found through this study and other relevant studies (Ferris, 1999; Ferris, 1995; Goldstein, 2004; Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a, 2006b) that constructive criticism is complex interferences to maximize the usefulness of written feedback. Hence, constructive feedback is an explicit recommendation to individual students with the aim to address students' faults and mark strengths in his/her text clearly and systematically to develop, sustain, and encourage the effort to continue writing.

5.2 Study limitations

Qualitative study is subjective by nature to construct reality by individuals (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Therefore, the researcher is actively involved in the research process depending heavily on the researcher's positionality, stance, and background. In this respect, this research was influenced by my view of the world and how it can be interpreted, especially in choosing the topic, methods, and data analysis. Thus, transparency might be an issue for the reader to grasp all the procedures the researcher has concluded. In regard, the thematic analysis gives the researcher the freedom to search for themes and to provide a shape to the shapeless. The freedom and flexibility of this type of analysis are affected by the notions of the researcher. Hence, the readers may find it difficult to trace the researcher's steps in locating the themes. To address this issue, I endeavor to follow a transparent process to demonstrate how I came up with the themes step by step.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting qualitative research was challenging because it required the researcher's physical interference while carrying out the methods. Nevertheless, the survey was conducted online and did not need my attendance in person to hand it to the participants; my availability in the classroom was important to explain the questions if any of the participants had an inquiry. Another limitation regarding the methods is the language, the English teacher of the classroom informed me that the methods could be conducted in English. However, I assume that some participants find it challenging to understand and express themselves fluently; an important portion of data extraction could be lost during this process.

Qualitative study is a developing process that can be enhanced perpetually, and thus in the following list I will present the points that could have been done differently:

- To formulate more specific and more apparent open-ended questions in the methods for the potential to enhance the quality of extracted data.
- To carry out the case study in several schools and several grades to seek a broader and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon.
- To prepare a Norwegian and English version of the methods to enable the participants to choose

their preferred language.

- To be more engaged in collecting the focus group participants for wider perspectives, e.g., high-achieving students, low-achieving students, and motivation levels.
- Interview the teacher to have a more understandable insight into providing and perceiving written feedback.

With the adequate resources and experience in the field of qualitative research, this research quality would have been more fulfilling. However, I consider this study has, to some extent, attained its purpose according to its capacity.

5.3 Study implication and further research

The findings in this study gave a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of written feedback to contribute along with the similar studies finding out the basis and art of providing effective and valuable feedback. The teachers' background and beliefs play a significant role in shaping their feedback practices which can neglect the students' preferences toward achieving development. In this view, this study investigates the participants' view of what successfully written feedback is and how the teachers can be the moderator between the competence aims and the students' needs to obtain an engaging input to help them advance their knowledge constructively.

This study might help future studies elaborate on the individual findings more profoundly and set a starting point for research that seeks further investigation of students' perspectives concerning written feedback. Furthermore, this research might equip English teachers with the information to alter their feedback practices and make them aware of students' preferences, interpersonal relationships, and the internal and external factors that might affect feedback quality. Moreover, this study sheds light on the significance of implementing substantial and adequate training in the teacher education colleges to prepare the teachers for the proper ways of providing written feedback.

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Appendix A – Information letter and consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

"Pupils' beliefs, perception, and preferences of written feedback in EFL classroom"

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate the pupils' perception, beliefs, and preferences of written English feedback in the EFL classroom. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The purpose of this project is to examine pupils' perceptions, beliefs, and preferences of written English feedback to cover and understand multiple angles of pupils' perceptions and preferences like feelings, motivation, the effectiveness of written feedback, etc. Thus, the collected data will solely be used in a master's thesis to study the previously mentioned research statements.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The Department of education in NTNU is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are being asked to participate in this research because the research aims to collect data from high school pupils. High school pupils have the potential to give valuable data to be later used in the master's thesis. To achieve this, 15 to 20 pupils from the upper high school are asked to participate in this research project.

What does participation involve for you?

The main method that will be used is an online-based survey and may be followed up by a group interview

- If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you filling in an online survey. It will take approx. 30 to 45 minutes. The survey includes closed-ended and open-ended questions to know about your preferences and perception of the feedback on your English writing. Your answers will be recorded electronically.
- You may also be selected to participate in a follow-up group interview. The questions in the interview consist mainly of questions are like the questions in the survey. The main purpose of the group interview is to have a discussion between the participants and the interviewee about different angles of written feedback on your English writing. Your voice will be recorded on a voice recorder.

Your parents may, on request, have the right to demand a copy of the survey and/or the interview guide in advance.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you could withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your participation in the project research will not affect your relationship with the teachers or the school.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Only the student and the supervisor of this project research will have access to the personal data
- The online-based survey will take place on an authorized website that will ensure to protect your identity as your participation will be anonymized.
- Upon your participation in an interview group, I will change your name with a code. The participants' names in the group interview will be anonymized, and the codes will be used instead. The names in the group interview will be locked away.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on 25.5.2021. all the personal data and the recorded voice will be deleted at the end of the research project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the Department of education in NTNU, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The Department of education in NTNU: Muhammad Brnieh by email: muhammab@stud.ntnu.no , and Warren Merkel by email warren.merkel@ntnu.no .
- Our Data Protection Officer: Thomas Helgesen by email Thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no .
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader
Warren Merkel

Student: Muhammad Brnieh

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project "A study of the cognitive effects of feedback on pupils' self-esteem in writing" and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an online-based survey
- to participate in a group interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 25.05.2021

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix B – Research permit from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD)

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 753612 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 22.07.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 25.05.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1 f) og sikkerhet (art. 32). Nettskjema er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Henrik Netland Svensen

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Appendix C – Survey

English written feedback and students' perception of it

In this survey, you will have closed-ended and open-ended questions. Please give general answers to the questions

1. What is your favorite subject/s in school?
2. How long have you been studying English?
3. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?
 - English is one of my favorite subjects in school
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - I like to write in English
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - English written tests are stressful
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - By giving me written feedback, teachers help me improve my English writing skills
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - I am satisfied with the written English feedback my teachers give me
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - Written feedback affects my confidence concerning English writing
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - Critical feedback positively affects my motivation to continue writing
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - I am satisfied with the written English feedback my teachers give me
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - I do not usually like to receive an English written feedback after having a written English test or assignment
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
 - What do you want the written feedback to focus on?
 - Grammar
 - Spelling
 - Punctuation
 - Structure

Organization

Content

Other (please explain)

4. How often would you like to get English written feedback (e.g. after every written English assignment, test, etc.)? Why?
5. Would you rather have a written or oral feedback about your English writing? Explain.
6. In your opinion, what do you expect from the English written feedback to boost your motivation?
7. In your opinion, is critical written feedback (negative comments) sometimes needed to enhance your English writing? Why?
8. How do you perceive grammar error correction in the English written feedback about your writing?
9. Can negative and/or positive comments in the English written feedback affect your confidence in improving your English writing skills? Explain.
10. Do you feel anxious/worried of getting negative written English feedback after a writing project? Explain.
11. How would you define good written feedback or bad written feedback concerning your English writing?
12. What would you like to be included and/or avoided in the English written feedback about your English writing? Explain your answer.
13. Language-wise, how would you feel/think of each following point if it happens to be in the teacher's English written feedback? (E.g. clear, motivating, negative, positive, vague, etc.)
 - 1) "Revise all subject-verb agreement in your paper."
 - 2) "Can you change past tense into present tense in your paper?"
 - 3) "It is important to start your paper with a proper introduction."
14. How would you feel about the relationship between you and the teacher after getting critical (negative) English written feedback?

Appendix D – open-ended questions objectives in the survey and focus group

























Open-ended questions	Objective
1- How often would you like to get English written feedback (e.g. after every written English assignment, test, etc.)? Why?	Measuring students' preference in receiving English written feedback.
2- Would you rather have a written or oral feedback about your English writing? Explain.	Capturing students' preference in receiving oral or written feedback.
3- In your opinion, what do you expect from the English written feedback to boost your motivation?	In-depth question about the functions that written feedback may contain to boost the students' motivation.
4- In your opinion, is critical written feedback (negative comments) sometimes needed to enhance your English writing? Why?	Explore the informants' perception about critical feedback and its developing role.
5- How do you perceive grammar error correction in the English written feedback about your writing?	Exploring the students' perception of grammar correction in written feedback.
6- Can negative and/or positive comments in the English written feedback affect your confidence in improving your English writing skills? Explain	Investigating the effect of praising and criticism on the students' confidence in writing.
7- Do you feel anxious/worried of getting negative written English feedback after a writing project? Explain.	Exploring the role of anxiety in receiving written feedback.
8- How would you define good written feedback or bad written feedback concerning your English writing?	Exploring students' overview insight of good and bad written feedback.
9- What would you like to be included and/or avoided in the English written feedback about your English writing? Explain your answer.	Exploring the elements that may included or excluded from students' point of view
12- Language-wise, how would you feel/think of each following point if it happens to be in the teacher's English written feedback? (E.g., clear, motivating, negative, positive, vague, etc.) 1) "Revise all subject-verb agreement in your paper." 2) "Can you change past tense into present tense in your paper?" 3) "It is important to start your paper with a proper introduction."	Investigating the preference of the language use in written feedback: 1- Direct feedback 2- Hedging 3- Indirect feedback
13- How would you feel about the relationship between you and the teacher after getting critical (negative) English written feedback?	Measuring the relationship with the teacher after receiving critical written feedback.

Appendix E – Time duration of responding to the survey

Vis	Bygg skjema	Innstillinger	Rettigheter	Innhent svar	Se resultater
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[← Se resultater](#)

Leverte svar

Svar	Svartid		
10863131	5 minutter 45 sekunder		Slett
10863161	4 minutter 31 sekunder		Slett
10863194	5 minutter 33 sekunder		Slett
10863226	9 minutter 17 sekunder		Slett
10863229	10 minutter 36 sekunder		Slett
10863237	12 minutter 57 sekunder		Slett
10863251	11 minutter 47 sekunder		Slett
10863272	14 minutter 37 sekunder		Slett
10863286	12 minutter		Slett
10863287	13 minutter 58 sekunder		Slett
10863290	14 minutter 39 sekunder		Slett
10863302	15 minutter 38 sekunder		Slett
10863304	16 minutter 23 sekunder		Slett
10863332	22 minutter 39 sekunder		Slett
10863389	20 minutter 58 sekunder		Slett
10863401	19 minutter 3 sekunder		Slett
10863450	22 minutter 59 sekunder		Slett
10863470	16 minutter 30 sekunder		Slett
10863478	19 minutter 34 sekunder		Slett
10863480	25 minutter 13 sekunder		Slett
10863481	21 minutter 14 sekunder		Slett
10863488	22 minutter 29 sekunder		Slett
10863527	25 minutter 35 sekunder		Slett
10863568	27 minutter 55 sekunder		Slett

[Slett alle svar](#) [Vis alle svar som PDF](#)

Appendix F – coding scheme on NVivo

○	Mix of oral and written feedback	1	4
○	Negative vs constructive	1	1
○	Oral feedback	1	5
○	Postive perception of negative written fee	1	4
○	Role of written feedback in improvment	1	4
○	○ Aim to improve regardless of the type	1	5
○	○ Critical feedback improves English writ	1	6
○	Students' perception to critical and positiv	2	48
○	○ Confidence	1	7
○	○ Impact of grades	1	1
○	○ Impact of negative comments	1	1
○	○ Impact of positive comments	1	2
○	○ Teachers role	1	3
○	○ Constructive criticism	2	9
○	○ Formative vs summative feedback	1	1
○	○ Grammar correction	1	1
○	○ Honesty	1	5
○	○ Dishonesty in giving written feedb	1	1
○	○ Honest in a proper way	1	1
○	Improvment	1	1
○	○ Critical feedback	1	2
○	○ Critical constructive feedback	1	1
○	○ Negative Vs constructive	1	1
○	○ Positive and critical feedback	2	22
○	○ balancing between positive and cr	2	10
○	○ Mixing critical with positive feedb	1	6
○	○ negative and positive comments	1	1
○	○ self-traits	1	3
○	○ self-esteem	1	1
○	○ Reaction to teacher's dishonesty and r	1	2
○	○ Relationship with the teacher	1	3
○	○ relevanc of written feedback	1	8
○	○ Combining oral with written feeda	1	4
○	○ Irrelevant	1	2
○	○ Relevant	1	2
○	○ Understandable feedback	1	16
○	○ Clarity	1	8
○	○ Connecting clarity with elaboratio	1	2
○	○ Elaborative feedback	1	3

<input type="radio"/>	Teacher must be sincere	1	1
<input type="radio"/>	Written feedback	1	5
<input type="radio"/>	Written feedback impact on motivation	1	17
<input type="radio"/>	Aim to improve regardless of written f	1	3
<input type="radio"/>	Constructive feedback needs appropri	1	1
<input type="radio"/>	Demotivation of critical comments	1	5
<input type="radio"/>	Has no impact on motivation	1	2
<input type="radio"/>	Should include positive elements to	1	6