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Postsecondary Online Students' Preferences for Text-Based Instructor Feedback

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Misalignment between student preferences and instructor practices regarding writing feedback may impede student learning. This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study addressed postsecondary online students' preferences and the reasons for their preferences. A survey was used to collect 93 responses from postsecondary students attending a large private online university; data collection included interviews with a subsample of 4 participants. Findings indicated students preferred proximal, detailed, supportive feedback to enhance their writing skills and to understand deductions assessed by instructors. Findings may increase instructor awareness of students' preferences and enhance collaboration in the feedback process to promote writing skill development and improve academic outcomes.

Researchers have explored postsecondary students' preferences for various types of instructor feedback including written, audio recorded, and video recorded (Bilbro, Iluzada, & Clark, 2013; Crews & Wilkinson, 2010; Ice, Swan, Diaz, Kupczynski, & Swan-Dagen, 2010). However, most of the research has been done with students attending brick-and-mortar institutions. Several researchers affirmed the importance of instructor feedback to student learning in the postsecondary setting (Johnson & Cooke, 2015; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Van der Kleij, Feskens, & Eggen, 2015). Instructor feedback could undermine learning if the tone and content are not perceived by students to be supportive (Carless, 2006). Also, discrepancies in belief systems between teachers and students could disrupt the learning process (Schulz, 2001). Ferguson (2011) acknowledged the occasional dissatisfaction reported by students regarding feedback and asserted that instructors' understanding of students' preferences is essential to the learning process. Schulz (2001) agreed that instructors should explore students' feedback preferences and should address conflicts that could impede learning. Instructors need not strive to please their students (Smith, 2008); however, instructors may increase the likelihood of student learning by using strategies that enhance student engagement such as demonstrating awareness of students' feedback preferences. Given the increasing number of students matriculated in online programs (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014), describing online students' preferences for electronic feedback delivered via software applications such as Microsoft Word may help instructors serve students' learning needs more effectively (Nicole & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Background

Numerous studies have addressed postsecondary students' perceptions and preferences regarding instructor feedback. Several researchers reported that postsecondary students' preferred clear, detailed

comments (Ferguson, 2011; Glover & Brown, 2006; Mulliner & Tucker, 2015;), suggestive rather than directive comments (Can, 2009; Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Treglia, 2008), electronic feedback (Can, 2009; Rae & Cochrane, 2008), prompt feedback (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015; Poulos & Mahony, 2008), and a balance between positive and negative comments (Duncan, 2007; Smith, 2008; Weaver, 2006). Studies also indicated that active students were more inclined to review and apply instructor feedback than passive students (Wingate, 2010; Zacharias, 2007). Students preferred feedback that aligned with assignment criteria (Ferguson, 2011; Weaver, 2006; Wolsey, 2008) and enhanced their performance on upcoming assignments (Orsmond & Merry, 2011). Studies done with English as a foreign language (EFL) students indicated that students' preferences appeared to be associated with their literacy levels (Boram, 2009; Tabatabaei & Ahranjani, 2012). However, most of the studies done on postsecondary students' feedback preferences addressed students attending brick-and-mortar institutions. Few studies addressed online students' preferences (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Gallien & Oomen-Early, 2008).

Detailed, meaningful instructor feedback adds value to the learning process, and instructors working in an online environment should consider how their feedback may enhance their students' writing skills (Crews & Wilkinson, 2010). Wolsey (2008) and Nordrum, Evans, and Gustafsson (2013) agreed that instructor feedback plays an important role in the formative learning process that occurs within individual writing projects and also in the development of skills that students will employ in future assignments. Feedback is the most personal, specific, and direct way in which students are given writing instruction (Szymanski, 2014). Weaver (2006) agreed that feedback stimulates student reflection and development and is an essential part of the learning process. Weaver also noted that identifying students' strengths and weaknesses may facilitate their self-assessment and application of feedback to future writing assignments.

Purpose, Framework, and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe undergraduate- and graduate-level online students' preferences for instructor feedback delivered electronically via software applications such as Microsoft Word. The purpose also included describing reasons why students prefer certain types of feedback rather than others. An additional purpose had been to test for variation among online students' preferences based on age, grade level, online experience, and English-language status; however, due to the lower than expected sample size and the disproportionate representation of graduate students, native English speakers, and experienced online learners in the self-selected sample, this third purpose could not be satisfied.

Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory provided a suitable framework for the study. Vygotsky argued that learning promotes internal developmental processes that occur only when the student is collaborating with individuals in his or her environment. The current study applied social-constructivist principles by encouraging instructor recognition of the significance of students' preferences in the instructor-student relationship (Benko, 2012) and by exhorting instructors to engage with students in the recursive writing process by embracing their preferences as essential to their writing skill development (Budge, 2011; Ferguson, 2011). Instructor feedback was situated as a scaffolding tool used to move students through their zone of proximal development as emerging academic writers (Benko, 2012; McCarthy, 2015). Instructor feedback increases students' self-regulation as writers and thinkers (Treglia, 2008) and promotes learning by enhancing students' self-regulation, improving their motivation, and reducing their anxiety (McVey, 2008). Szymanski (2014) supported the use of professional-genre assignments that promote undergraduate students as apprentice writers and encourage their self-regulation as emerging scholars. When viewed through a social-constructivist lens, the purpose of the current study was to describe online students' preferences for different levels of scaffolding and to explore their reasons for preferring certain types of feedback rather than others. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What types of electronic feedback in word-processing software do postsecondary online students prefer?
2. What reasons do postsecondary online students give for preferring certain types of electronic feedback but not others?

Method

The study included a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design with a survey questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions followed by interviews with participants to probe their preferences more deeply (Patton, 2002). Survey questions were adapted from those used by Budge (2011) and Wolsey (2008); permission was obtained prior to the study. Survey data came from 93 undergraduate and graduate students attending a large private online university in the Midwestern United States. Four participants who completed the survey also participated in semi structured interviews. Interview participants came from different programs (psychology, education, nursing, and public policy) to enhance disciplinary representation in interview data.

The survey instrument contained 17 quantitative questions and two qualitative questions (Appendix A). The first 12 quantitative questions addressed students' preferences for online feedback delivered via software applications such as Microsoft Word. Silva (2012) noted that "electronic feedback via Microsoft Word comments...affords the reader nearly an infinite amount of space to provide commentary" (p. 3). Silva conceded that video technology provides similar advantages but expressed concern about instructors' willingness to spend extra time on video feedback and cautioned that the size of video files may limit delivery options. Silva acknowledged that audio comments may be used to personalize the feedback process; however, technology issues may impede students' reception of audio feedback. In addition, the lack of proximity of audio comments to essay text may reduce the impact of audio feedback on student revisions and learning. Given the predominant use of text-based feedback in online programs, quantitative survey questions addressed students' preferences for text-based feedback. However, two open-ended questions were included to allow students to report their preferences for other types of feedback, including video and audio. The survey also included five questions addressing participants' age, grade level, online experience, English-language status, and area of study. Interview questions (Appendix B) were aligned with survey questions to explore participants' feedback preferences and the reasons for their preferences.

Data Analysis

Descriptive frequencies were used to report quantitative survey data findings. Analysis of open-ended survey questions involved a structured yet flexible approach consistent with Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) recommendation to use both deductive coding based on the conceptual framework and inductive coding to identify unanticipated themes that emerged from the

data analysis. Preliminary analysis included provisional codes borrowed from Aliakbari and Toni's (2009) study comparing the influence of different types of error-correction techniques on postsecondary EFL students' grammatical accuracy: (a) direct coded, (b) indirect coded, (c) direct uncoded, and (d) indirect uncoded.

Quantitative Results

Demographic data indicated most participants (95.6%) identified as graduate students. When asked whether English was their first language, most participants (89.0%) answered yes. Regarding area of study, most participants selected social sciences (36.3%), health sciences (24.2%), or other (33.0%). In this third category, most participants (23) identified education as their area of study. Additional categories included business (3.3%), humanities (2.2%), and information technology (1.1%). When asked how many online courses they had taken, most participants (84.6%) answered four or more. Most participants (76%) were between the ages of 30 and 54.

Participants strongly agreed (63.4%) or slightly agreed (20.4%) with having instructors correct errors using track changes. Participants also agreed (95.7%) with having online instructors include comments to explain their corrections. Most participants (77.4%) preferred balloon comments in the margins of the paper, with less than a quarter (20.4%) preferring comments typed within the essay text. Most participants were neutral (34.4%) or strongly disagreed (19.4%) with the use of grammar codes. Participants (92.4%) preferred that instructors include both comments and corrections in their feedback. Most participants (58.1%) preferred comments inserted throughout the paper, and over a third (37.6%) preferred comments inserted throughout the paper and at the end.

Participants (91.4%) reported that they always review their online assignments for feedback from their instructor. In addition, participants strongly agreed (67.7%) or slightly agreed (15.1%) that electronic feedback provided by online instructors had been helpful in developing their writing skills. Results were mixed in response to Survey Question 9, "Considering the types of instructor comments listed below, which ones do you prefer?" Participants were allowed to choose more than one response. The most popular choices were explorations (85.0%), corrections to content (81.7%), and complex affirmations (73.1%). The least popular choices were personal reflections (24.7%), simple affirmations (32.3%), and observations (43%). Table 1 shows a breakdown of participants' responses to this question.

Most participants (82.8%) preferred online instructors to include grading rubrics with their feedback. In addition, most participants strongly agreed

(51.6%) or slightly agreed (24.7%) that their instructors' electronic feedback had been consistent with the grading rubric. Most participants strongly agreed (64.1%) or slightly agreed (25.0%) that their English writing skills were very good.

Qualitative Survey Results

Nearly all of the 93 survey participants responded to the two open-ended survey questions. Major themes contained 20 or more participant comments, and minor themes contained at least two but not more than 19 participant comments. Major themes included the desire to improve writing skills and the preference for proximal, detailed, supportive feedback.

Theme 1: Desire to Improve Skills

The dominant theme from the qualitative data was desire to improve as academic writers. Participants expressed an interest in using instructor feedback to develop their writing skills. Data showed 61 responses included a comment reflecting a desire to improve. One participant reported, "Feedback is how students learn and grow in their writing and understanding of information. I cannot become a better writer and learn if I do not receive feedback that helps me do both of these things." A second participant commented, "I like to know what I am doing wrong with recommendations to improve," and indicated, "I appreciate feedback that is meaningful. For example, if I make a mistake or do something wrong, I need to know about it so that I can improve."

Theme 2: Proximal Comments

Many participant responses (53) indicated that instructor comments should be located near related essay text. Approximately one fourth (14) of these responses indicated that proximity was important but did not specify the desired location (e.g., marginal balloons or within paragraph text). One participant reported, "I prefer to receive electronic feedback from my online instructor within the body of my essay." Another observed, "With comments not associated with a specific part of my paper, I am not sure what the instructor is talking about. It helps to have the comment be located in the location being referenced." According to a third participant, "It is important for me to have feedback posted throughout the paper rather than a long comment at the end. This makes the comments and corrections more concise and clear and easier to follow." A fourth participant commented, "I prefer the feedback directly adjacent to the error or the section being referred to in order to avoid confusion."

Nearly half (26) of the responses in Theme 2 indicated a clear preference for marginal balloon comments. Only one of the 93 participants indicated a

Table 1
Preferences for Types of Instructor Comments

Response	Number	Percent
Simple affirmations	30	32.3
Complex affirmations	68	73.1
Explorations	79	85.0
Personal Reflections	23	24.7
Clarifications	58	62.4
Observations	40	43.0
Questions	59	63.4
Corrections to content	76	81.7
Corrections to mechanics	57	61.3

preference for in-paragraph comments rather than balloons. Ten responses in this theme indicated a preference for both in-text comments and a long comment at the end. Two responses indicated preference for comments only at the end.

Theme 3: Clear, Detailed Feedback

Many participant responses (37) indicated a preference for instructor feedback that is easily comprehended and substantive. One participant reported, “I dislike simple feedback that does not provide a substantive critique of my work. A ‘good job’ or ‘it needs work’ does nothing to improve my comprehension or writing skills.” Another participant commented, “I would like that my online instructor’s feedback was substantial, productive, encouraging, clear, concise, and precise.” A third participant added, “It is essential to have detailed feedback when working at the doctoral level. This feedback should include specific detail to errors, content that needs additions and/or omissions, and simply learning from the instructor’s expertise.”

Theme 4: Constructive, Supportive Feedback

The fourth major theme (28 comments) was that instructor feedback should be delivered with a supportive tone. One participant insisted that instructors should “eliminate value loaded bias comments. Give me direction, not insult. Let me use my own mind—nudge me the right way so I learn.” Another participant reported, “I believe various instructors take liberties to insult and complain. I do not want to be the recipient of someone’s bad day.” A third participant commented, “It is important for me to know that my instructors care about my learning and growing rather than how many errors they can find.”

Minor Themes

Several responses (18) indicated support for electronic feedback delivered as attachments or links

within courses or via e-mail. Participants described the convenience and efficiency of electronic feedback. Eleven responses indicated a preference for rubrics to clarify how the grade was determined, and seven comments reflected a preference for track changes delivered via Microsoft Word to promote error correction and skill development. Seven responses indicated that feedback should be delivered in a timely manner, and five comments indicated that instructor feedback should include information explaining why points were deducted. Four responses indicated that instructors should include examples with their feedback, and three comments indicated that substantive feedback is needed even though a good grade was given. Three responses indicated that instructors should avoid personal reflections in their feedback. No qualitative survey comments indicated a preference for video or audio feedback. Table 2 shows the number of comments associated with major and minor themes.

Interview Results

Consistent with a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), interview transcripts were analyzed using survey data codes as provisional codes. Provisional codes preselected from Aliakbari and Toni’s (2009) study were abandoned in the analysis of survey data. However, provisional codes that emerged from the survey data analysis were useful in the examination of interview data.

Interview data supported all four major themes from the qualitative survey data. Interview responses also supported four of the minor themes, including rubric feedback, timely feedback, feedback needed to justify deductions, and feedback needed despite a good grade. In addition, two new themes emerged from the interview data: (a) include references to external resources, and (b) provide evidence that the instructor read the paper. One participant commented, “What has

Table 2
Themes From Qualitative Survey Data

Theme	Number of responses
Desire to improve skills	61
Proximal feedback	53
Clear, detailed feedback	37
Constructive, supportive feedback	28
Electronic feedback	18
Rubrics included	11
Track changes used	7
Timely feedback	7
Feedback to justify deductions	5
Examples included	4
Feedback needed despite good grade	3
No instructor personal reflections	3
No grammar codes	2

helped is when they refer me in their comments to other research or back to the literature of the course.” A second participant noted, “What I found most helpful were very specific references. A couple of professors were very good with specific reference citations especially when it has to do with APA.” Another participant mentioned, “It’s helpful when you see the comments that they actually looked at the paper.”

Discussion

Misalignment between instructor practices and student preferences in the writing feedback process may impede student learning (Schulz, 2001). Minimal research on postsecondary online students’ preferences for text-based feedback prompted the current study. Findings showed that qualitative survey results were consistent with quantitative survey results. Qualitative responses indicated that participants preferred proximal, detailed, supportive feedback including rubrics, track changes, and examples to help them improve their writing skills, but participants did not want grammar codes or instructors’ personal reflections. Qualitative survey results also indicated that feedback is needed even when the grade is good and to justify deductions. Quantitative findings showed that participants preferred proximal comments, rubric feedback, and the use of track changes for corrections. Quantitative results reinforced the preference for detailed feedback provided via complex rather than simple affirmations. Interview findings supported survey findings. Interview participants commented that detailed feedback is needed to provide evidence that the paper had been read and to improve writing performance on upcoming assignments. Interview participants also reported that instructor feedback should identify resources such as websites students can access to promote their skill development.

Most of the themes aligned with results from previous studies. The preference for clear, detailed feedback was consistent with findings from Can (2009), Duncan (2007), Ferguson (2011), Glover and Brown (2006), Mulliner and Tucker (2015), Rae and Cochrane (2008), and Zacharias (2007). Riddell (2015) noted the significant body of research supporting detailed feedback as more effective than general feedback in enhancing writing performance. Students who received personalized feedback scored significantly higher and were more satisfied with the course than those who received collective feedback (Gallien & Oomen-Early, 2008). Personalized feedback on related assignments may be especially helpful in enhancing skill development (Vardi, 2012, 2013). According to Poulos and Mahony (2008), effective feedback is timely and specific to the student’s individual needs.

A strong preference for supportive feedback aligned with findings from previous studies. Mulliner and Tucker (2015) found that feedback should be delivered in a constructive, supportive manner. Weaver (2006) noted that tutors should monitor their response styles and balance positive feedback with critical feedback while ensuring that comments are aligned with assessment criteria and learning objectives. Weaver also observed that, according to student participants, tutors did not provide enough feedback and did not include enough positive comments. Poulos and Mahony (2008) observed that negative feedback had a demoralizing impact on students’ motivation and learning. Other studies indicated support for balance between positive and negative comments (Can, 2009; Ferguson, 2011; Treglia, 2008).

Participants’ preference for exploratory comments, questions, and complex affirmations was consistent with findings from several studies that indicated a preference for suggestive rather than directive feedback (Can, 2009;

Mulliner & Tucker, 2015; Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Treglia, 2008). Some studies showed that instructors pay attention to micro-level issues rather than content issues and use a directive rather than suggestive approach (Stern & Solomon, 2007; Szymanski, 2014). This type of feedback does not support students' preference for content-oriented feedback delivered via explorations and questions, as reported by participants in the current study. However, the self-selected sample of primarily graduate-level native English speakers may account for this preference, which was consistent with Wolsey's (2008) findings.

Participants' preference for rubric feedback aligned with Nordrum et al.'s (2013) finding that rubric-articulated feedback helped students understand general issues with their writing and techniques for approaching future writing assignments. Nordrum et al. also found that rubric feedback was not as useful as in-text feedback, which served a corrective function as opposed to the evaluative function of rubric feedback. Students in Ferguson's (2011) study reported a preference for customized, criteria-oriented comments explaining how grades were determined, which was consistent with findings from the current study. Riddell (2015) noted that providing students with a clear understanding of how their work will be assessed may increase the likelihood of students meeting assignment expectations. Although Riddell did not specify rubrics as a means of enhancing assessment awareness, this tool is often used for that purpose in postsecondary education. One major theme from the current study (desire for proximal feedback) was not widely reported in the literature. The preference for proximal feedback echoed Wolsey's (2008) finding that most students preferred comments located near relevant essay text.

Participants' preference for supportive, detailed feedback aligned with social constructivist theory, which provided the theoretical framework for the study. Instructor feedback was situated as a scaffolding tool intended to move students through their zone of proximal development from other regulation to self-regulation. Participants' preference for exploratory comments and questions suggested their desire for feedback that promotes independent thinking and encourages greater self-regulation as academic writers. Overall, participants' preference for proximal feedback suggested a desire for moderate scaffolding. Although participants supported the use of track changes to designate corrections, the preference for exploratory, suggestive comments indicated a desire for less intrusive scaffolding.

Constructivist regard for students' preferences should be examined in the context of instructor workload. Postsecondary instructors face a persistent challenge to "balance their desire to provide personalized, meaningful feedback with the limited time they can allot to each paper" (Bilbro et al., 2013,

p. 47). Instructors experience pressure to provide prompt, detailed feedback to high numbers of students in postsecondary courses (Lunt & Curran, 2010). Riddell (2015) argued that increasing the number of feedback loops involving drafts, feedback, and revisions may enhance students' metacognitive awareness and promote development of academic writing skills; however, Riddell cautioned against burdening instructors with an unmanageable workload. Postsecondary instructors should accommodate student preferences whenever possible and find ways to balance their workload when providing scaffolding feedback to promote writing skill development.

Limitations and Recommendations

High self-efficacy may have been a factor in motivating students to volunteer for the study, as suggested by the percentage of participants who strongly agreed (64.1%) or slightly agreed (25.0%) that their writing skills were very good. Wingate (2010) found that students with low self-efficacy as academic writers were less likely to value instructor feedback. Other researchers observed that active students were more inclined to study and apply instructor feedback than passive students (Duncan, 2007; Rae & Cochrane, 2008; Wingate, 2010; Zacharias, 2007). Most participants in the current study reported that they always read instructor feedback, which may limit generalizability of findings. Future studies should include more data from students with low self-efficacy, although gathering these data may be challenging.

None of the survey participants in the current study reported a preference for audio and video feedback when responding to the open-ended questions, and none of the interview participants reported having received these types of feedback in their online courses. One interview participant reported that these types of feedback would probably not be helpful, but another indicated that audio feedback would be better than "great job." The other interview participants did not report a preference or lack of preference for audio or video feedback. More research should be done exploring postsecondary online students' preference for audio and video feedback, as these types gain broader acceptance and use in postsecondary education.

The study was further limited by participant self-selection in that most participants were graduate-level native English speakers who had considerable online learning experience. Future studies could include multiple data collection sites (both public and private postsecondary institutions), more data from undergraduate students, and more data from inexperienced online students. A larger sample would allow researchers to test for variation in preferences based on demographic variables

including age, grade level, online experience, and English-language status. Findings from these studies may help instructors further customize their feedback and follow a constructivist approach when promoting writing skill development among postsecondary online students.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. I prefer to have online instructors correct my errors using **track changes**. (Choose one)
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Slightly agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Slightly disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

2. I prefer to have online instructors include comments to explain their corrections. (Choose one)
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Slightly agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Slightly disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

3. I prefer to have online instructors' comments appear: (Choose one)
 - a. Within my essay text
 - b. In **balloons** in the margin of my paper
 - c. Neither

4. I prefer to have online instructors use **grammar codes** when identifying errors in my assignments. (Choose one)
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Slightly agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Slightly disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

5. I prefer to have online instructors include the following when grading my assignments. (Choose one)
 - a. Corrections only
 - b. Comments only
 - c. Corrections and comments
 - d. Neither corrections nor comments
 - e. Highlighted errors but no corrections or comments
 - f. Other (please describe _____)

6. I prefer to have an online instructor: (Choose one)
 - a. Insert comments throughout my paper
 - b. Type a long comment at the end
 - c. Neither
 - d. Both

7. I always review my online assignments for electronic feedback from my online instructor. (Choose one)

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Slightly agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Slightly disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

8. I have found that the **electronic feedback** provided by online instructors has been helpful in developing my writing skills. (Choose one)

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Slightly agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Slightly disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

9. Considering the types of instructor comments listed below, which one(s) do you prefer? (Choose as many as apply)

- a. Simple affirmations (e.g. Good point! Nice job!)
- b. Complex affirmations (e.g. You made a great point here because....)
- c. Explorations (e.g. You might also consider....)
- d. Personal reflections (e.g. Your point reminded me of an experience I had....)
- e. Clarifications (e.g. Studies actually show that.... I think the author was trying to say....)
- f. Observations (e.g. I wasn't aware of this.... I came to the same conclusion....)
- g. Questions (e.g. Do you mean...? What about...?)
- h. Corrections to content (e.g. This point is confusing because.... Please develop your ideas here by....)
- i. Corrections to mechanics such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, etc.

10. I prefer online instructors to include completed **grading rubrics** with their electronic feedback. (Choose one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. In my online courses, the instructor's electronic feedback is consistent with the grading rubric. (Choose one)

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Slightly agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Slightly disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

12. I consider my English writing skills to be very good. (Choose one)

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Slightly agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Slightly disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

13. In your own words, please explain how you prefer to receive electronic feedback from your online instructors in your writing assignments.

14. In your own words, please explain why you prefer certain types of electronic feedback from instructors but not others.

15. How much experience have you had receiving electronic feedback in online courses? (Choose one)

- a. 1 course
- b. 2-4 courses
- c. More than 4 courses

16. I am the following: (Choose one)

- a. Undergraduate student
- b. Graduate student

17. English is my first language. (Choose one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. My age is: (Choose one)

- a. 18-20
- b. 21-24
- c. 25-29
- d. 30-34
- e. 35-39
- f. 40-44
- g. 45-49
- h. 50-54
- i. 55-59
- j. 60-64
- k. 65+

19. My area of study is: (Choose one)

- a. Business
- b. Information Technology
- c. Health Sciences
- d. Social Sciences
- e. Humanities
- f. Other (please indicate _____)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. One of the survey questions asked you how you feel about instructors correcting your writing errors by editing them with track changes. How do you like to have your errors addressed electronically? Why?
2. Please describe where you like instructor comments to appear in your papers. What are the reasons you like that approach?
3. One of the survey questions asked about your preference for grading rubrics, which describe how well you met assignment expectations in categories such as content, organization, grammar, and style. How do you feel about the use of grading rubrics?
4. In your survey, you indicated that you liked certain types of comments but not others (e.g. simple affirmations, questions, corrections). Please explain why you like some types of comments but not others.
5. Please describe a positive experience you had with an instructor's electronic feedback in an online course. Why did you find the feedback helpful?
6. Please describe a negative experience you had with an instructor's electronic feedback in an online course. Why did the feedback seem unhelpful?
7. The survey focused primarily on text-based feedback such as track changes and comments. What other types of electronic feedback do you prefer (for example, audio comments, video files, or something else)? Why do you like this type of feedback?
8. When you think about your development as an academic writer, how has your online instructor's electronic feedback helped you improve your skills? What types of feedback have not been helpful? Why?