

## **CHAPTER II**

### **WRITING SUPERVISION, WRITING FEEDBACK, AND THESIS ASSESSMENT**

This chapter discusses relevant literature relating to the study. There are three main broad theories drawn in this study: writing supervision, writing feedback and thesis assessment.

The first part in this chapter (Section 2.1.) discusses writing supervision theories based on the ideas of Connell (1985), Zhao (2002), Bitchener et al. (2010), Plessis, (2011), Berlach, 2010), Barrass (1991), Chandrasekhar (2002), Phillips and Pugh (1994), Kamler & Thomson (2006), Green (2005). This section focuses on definitions of writing supervision, reasons for writing and problems in writing thesis.

The second part in this chapter (Section 2.2.) reviews writing feedback theories and previous relevant studies related to this study. They include the ideas of Brookhart (2008), Hattie & Timperley (2007), Hyland & Hyland (2006), Hyland (2009), Edlin (2011), Bailey and Garner (2010), Laske & Zuber-Skerritt (1996), Zimmerman & Schunk (2001, 2004), Pintrich & Zusho (2002), Pintrich (1995), Brutus & Manoogian (1997), This section discusses the definitions of feedback, the nature of feedback, the effectiveness of feedback, feedback providers and receivers, feedback strategies, feedback contents, sources of feedback and key issues of feedback.

The third part in this chapter focuses on thesis assessment criteria that is used to assess students' drafts of thesis by the independent evaluator. The criteria is designed on the basis of the ideas of Emilia (2008), Sorenson (2010), Holtom & Fisher (1999), Paltridge and Starfield (2007), Swales & Feak (1994): Kamler & Thomson, (2006); Mauch & Park (2003), Thomas (2000), and Glathorn &

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Joyner (2005). This section discusses the criteria of well written thesis including topic/title, contents and organisation, style and tone, and writing convention.

## **2.1. Writing Supervision**

Writing is not just as simple as translating the images of our thoughts into words but transforming our thoughts, redefining them or, with great pain and effort, giving shape to our ideas (Viete et al, 2012). In other words “Writing is an act of creation, not limited to realistic boundaries or societal norm – we write because it sets us free, it challenges our minds, it breathes life into our imaginations” (Plessis, 2011). The norm of writing a thesis includes “Think, Plan, Write and Revise” (Barrass, 1991). It is understood as our messy ideas may lead to messy writing: cluttered, disorganized, meaningless. That is why we need to think and plan before we write and revise by the assistance of supervisors or supervisory team who are regarded as the experts. Their assistance is to exercise with insight and understanding of what the student needs and what the student finds most effective (Bitchener et al, 2010).

The expert’s goal of writing supervision is to help the novice students come to a level of understanding of what is expected by the academic community (Berlach, 2010). Academic community knows that thesis writing is based on research. Research is finished only after it is written up; Clarity and brevity of thesis writing as to communicate ideas directly and clearly are shown in the whole parts of the thesis including introduction, review of literature, methodology, results, discussions and conclusions (Lindsay, 1997).

Thesis writing supervision known as research supervision is an academic activity which involves two parties: students who conduct the research and lecturers who supervise the research. Connell (1985, p. 38) provides a definition of supervision:

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[Supervision] is a genuinely complex teaching task. It requires a substantial commitment of time and energy. It involves grappling with a considerable range of problems, from technicalities of research design to the morale and sometimes health of the student. And it never stands still, as the character of the relationship changes markedly over the years of candidature.

The definition above has been focused more on a range of problems as reaction and interpretation to the situation encountered during research supervision. Research supervision is a complex process to achieve a high quality of thesis. Laske et al. in Zhao (2002. p. 5) give a further detailed definition signing that research supervision process is a process of fostering and enhancing learning, research and communication at the highest level. This process involves knowledge creation, transferring and sharing, and knowledge access improvement as well. The definition of the supervision process shows the complexity of the knowledge management process composing multiple roles and responsibilities for both the supervisor and supervisee to acquire, share and utilize knowledge. Students expect that “research supervision helps them to achieve a scientific, professional or personal goal, and to learn about research and how to conduct research against the quality standards of the system” and the supervisors expect “to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge through creating effective learning/research situations and entail opportunities to conduct research projects with students which enhance their own learning, research and reputation” (Zhao, 2002). From the information above, it is understood that research supervision involves both students and supervisors in process of communication to achieve their realistic expectations to gain standard quality of thesis.

In this study supervision is defined as a process of research writing communication between supervisors and students to foster and enhance learning

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in order to produce a quality thesis within the allocated time of completion. The communication is done through written and oral discussions on the drafts of students' thesis.

## **2.2. Writing Feedback**

This section discusses the definitions and functions of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), the nature of feedback (Edlin, 2011; Brookhart, 2008), the effectiveness of feedback (Bitchener et al., 2011; Dale, 2010; Moreno, 2004; Pridemore & Klein; 1995; Shute, 2006), feedback providers and receivers (Mills and Matthews, 2009; Ellis & Calvo, 2004; Hung et al, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; and Leki 1990), feedback strategies (Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis, 2010; Shute, 2007; Irons, 2007; Biber et al., 2001), feedback contents ( Sheen, 2007; Ruegg, 2010; Youyan 2013, etc) and feedback sources (Brookhart, 2008; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Jognstone, 2004; Murray, 2002; and Ellis et al, 2008)

### **2.2.1. Definitions of feedback**

Feedback is an oral or written correction, critique or comment on student's paper or a judgement about student's writing performance including both strengths and weaknesses of the writing performance from a teacher or supervisor. Feedback is conceptualized as information provided by a teacher regarding given aspects of a student's performance or understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Kepner (1991) defines feedback in general as "any procedures used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong." The procedures are to develop a greater understanding of students' expectations of feedback, their perceptions of what feedback is and how they use the feedback they receive. Another definition of feedback is "any information, process or activity which 'affords' or accelerates learning, whether by enabling students to achieve higher-quality learning outcomes than they might have otherwise attained, or by enabling

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them to attain these outcomes more rapidly” (Hounsell, 2004). In this study, feedback is defined as any information in the forms of written or oral regarding students’ writing performance to achieve high quality thesis.

### **2.2.2. The nature of writing feedback**

The nature of feedback refers to certain practices that are followed by supervisors to ensure that some aspects of written feedback are standardised by providing assessment criteria. It is believed that “some standard consistent practices needed to be followed when providing feedback and highlighted the need for consistency across courses within a whole programme” (Edlin, 2011). The standard practices that research has found to be important for students and supervisors include feedback strategies and feedback contents (Brookhart, 2008). Feedback strategies consist of timing, amount, mode and audience. While feedback contents include focus, comparison, function, valence, clarity, specificity and tone (Brookhart, 2008, pp. 3-9).

The issues of standard practices of feedback also consider supervisors as feedback providers and students as feedback receivers. Ray (2007, p. 26) points out the key characteristics of selected supervisors. Oliver (2004, p. 51) suggests the responsibility of supervisors. Sadler (1998) states that supervisors bring skills and expertise to the job at hand and these abilities should be acknowledged and respected. MA Program Director (2008) points out the responsibility of students. Further, Guide on thesis supervision (2010-2011) discusses detailed responsibility of students. While relationship between supervisors and students are discussed by Green (2005) and Armstrong (2004) .

The other issues of feedback are about feedback sources that include supervisors, tutors and peers. Feedback supervisors are discussed in Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006) who examined the seven principles of good feedback practice; Kumar & Stracke (2007) who investigated written feedback on a thesis,

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found that that there is little difference in the type of feedback provided by supervisors in the different disciplines. Vollmeyer & Rheiberg (2005) concerning the effect of feedback on learning, they found that learners expecting feedback used better strategies right from the start. Ellis et al. (2008) compared the effects of focused and unfocused feedback the use of English articles and reported that the corrective feedback was equally effective for the focused and unfocused groups. The importance of tutors is discussed by Mills and Matthews (2009) who examined tutor feedback found that students engaged more with the tutorial system and gained more from the experience. Ellis & Calvo (2004) regarding learning through discussions, they found that “students who have a deep understanding of how the discussions are related to their learning outcomes tend to approach the discussions in more meaningful ways”. Feedback peer is pointed out by Hyland & Hyland (2006:6) “peer review can be seen as formative developmental process that gives writers the opportunities to discuss their texts and discover others’ interpretation of them” In addition, a successful peer feedback context involved inviting students to exchange their drafts with a partner, write comments on the draft and then give oral feedback to each other (Peterson, 2003). All sources of feedback are expected to provide more feedback on a student’s learning and less on matters that sources judge as important (Boud & Falchikov, 2006, p. 402).

### **2.2.3. The Effectiveness of writing feedback**

Effective feedback is a constructive communication to an individual or group regarding how their behaviour and performance have been affected (Brutus & Manoogian, 1997). This feedback is “positive, consistent, timely and clear, with a balance between positive and constructive comments and comments that critiqued their work” (Bitchener et al., 2011). Feedback is also effective when the procedures employed by teachers powerfully impact the achievement of their

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students (Dale, 2010). If students are not able to use the feedback to produce improved work by re-doing the same assignment, no one will know that it has been effective (Boud, 2000). Some studies report that elaborative feedback produces significantly greater learning among students compared with feedback containing less information (Moreno, 2004; Pridemore & Klein; 1995; Shute, 2006).

There are three essential elements of effective feedback: recognition of desired goal, evidence about present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between two (Sadler, 1989; Black & William, 1998). The effectiveness of feedback is influenced by a number of factors, including the ability of students to self-assess, giving students clear goals and criteria, and setting out expected standards; the encouragement of teacher and peer dialogue around learning; closure of the ‘feedback loop’; the provision of quality feedback information; and the encouragement in students of positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

In this research, effective feedback is “positive, consistent, timely and clear, with a balance between positive and constructive comments and comments that critiqued their work” (Bitchener et al., 2011). The effectiveness of feedback is applicable for the feedback strategy and contents discussed in 2.2.5 and 2.2.6.

#### **2.2.4. Feedback Providers and Receivers**

As supervision involves feedback providers as supervisors, it is important to discuss how they fit together in the supervision. This section discusses selecting feedback providers as supervisors, responsibilities of supervisors and students as feedback receivers, students and supervisors relationship.

##### **2.2.4.1. Selecting Supervisors**

Feedback supervisors as providers are selected or decided by either or both students and the management of institution. Students as feedback receivers

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should know the criteria for the right thesis supervisors. Although an academician may have high reputation or be famous at his institution, students still need to be careful to select and decide a supervisor. Bolker in Emilia (2008, p. 35) reminds:

My first dissertation advisor was quite famous, but I quickly discovered that her students often had a hard time graduating, and that she appeared to compete with them and put obstacles in their paths. I remember the moment at which I realized that if I remained her advisee, I'd never finish. If choosing a politically advantageous, famous advisor makes it unlikely that you'll complete your degree, it's clearly not worth it.

The reputation of a selected supervisor does not guarantee the successful contribution to the thesis quality but to have supervisors whose expertise matches with student's topic of interest is more important. In a study of the research supervision process, Eggleston & Delamont (1983) state that the matching of student to supervisor for effective relationships is crucially important. Unluckily, the application of selecting a supervisor is often done in an unplanned manner, which can become one of the reasons for regret, lack of motivation, and poor quality of research output (Ray, 2007). The right or wrong selection of supervisors will contribute to the success or failure of the supervision. Completing a thesis including the delayed completion of thesis depends on the supervisors (Garcia et al., 1988). For those reasons, Odgen in Emilia (2008, pp. 33-34) points out:

With the RIGHT adviser, you advance steadily around to collect your degree on schedule, proud of your work you have produced. With the WRONG adviser, you will take very wrong route around the board, hit every dead end, advance one step only, two fall back two steps, and continually run the risk of falling off the board completely. Researching your adviser therefore is the MOST important research you will do concerning your dissertation



It is expected that students are able to select the right and effective supervisors. James and Baldwin (1999) point out that effective supervisors are to: (a) ensure the partnership is right for the project; (b) get to know students and carefully assess their needs; (c) establish reasonable agreed expectations; (d) work with students to establish a strong conceptual structure and research plan; (e) encourage students to write early and often; (f) initiate regular contact and provide high-quality feedback; (g) get students involved in the life of the department; (h) inspire and motivate; (i) help if academic and personal crises crop up; (j) take an active interest in students' future careers; and (k) carefully monitor the final production/presentation of the research. However, Professor Aminudin Aziz in Leo (2013) states that many supervisors have 'insufficient competence' (*Ilmu Ajug*). *Ajug* is an old traditional lamp which is able to give minimum light to the surrounding area. Ideally, a supervisor must have bright light (sufficient competence) in order to give bright ideas to students.

Each supervisor is unique and has their own styles. It is hard to match their styles with students' styles. Ray (2007, p. 26) in his study on selecting a dissertation supervisor suggests nine key characteristics of a good supervisor who is ready to support students having a high level of dependency to a high level of autonomy. The characteristics mentioned are that the supervisor: (a) is open to ideas and is flexible about adopting alternative approaches; (b) is conscious about time taken for completion and is generally willing to work towards it; (c) has ability to help the candidate in obtaining a suitable job after completion of dissertation; (d) matches of interest with the student's; (e) has high reputation in his field; (f) is cordial and understanding relationship; (g) possesses social network and relationship with other supervisors in the institute and outside; (h) will support the student in contentious situations, and defend his stand once it has been agreed upon previously; (i) guides a number of thesis, the more the better; and (j) is enthusiastic in guiding the thesis. These key characteristics should be

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able to be shown in the roles and responsibility of supervisors, responsibilities of students and their relationship.

In this study, the effective selected supervisors are the ones chosen in a planned manner and they match with students' topics of interest. They are open to ideas and flexible about adopting alternative approaches and also conscious about time taken for completion.

#### **2.2.4.2. Responsibilities of Supervisors**

A supervisor is a person who advises a supervisee to plan and conduct research, to write a research report or thesis, to help to produce well written thesis (Connell, 1985). He/she should help his/her students set writing goals from the start of the thesis and all the way through the end so that they know the whole stages such as planning their writing and making the plan manageable (Murray, 2002, p. 21).

Referring to the expected goals of writing supervision, more teachers have currently realized the importance of supervision and teaching aspect of their role as supervisors who attempt to act as a mentor, facilitator and coach (Pearson & Brew, 2002). Supervisors are not the only individuals who have roles and responsibility but students also have their own responsibilities. Oliver (2004, pp. 50-51) suggests:

There are clear expectations on both sides on such matters as regularity and structure of meetings, and the standard of work required to achieve the degree. Students are provided with information about important procedures, regulations, services and support, including authorship, intellectual property, copyright requirements and information on plagiarism. The supervisor is supportive of the student, and encourages open and constructive communication.

An important aspect of the tutor role is helping students take charge of their learning and ensuring they complete the Master's programme within a year,

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Graduate School of Communication (2010). Research students do not only need guidance, but also need to develop sufficient autonomy and freedom to design and execute their own projects (Cornwall et al., 1977); Harding, 1973). The other important supervisor's roles in thesis supervision include to make students "(a) become aware of their writing weaknesses; (b) acquire the appropriate knowledge; and (c) take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their writing" (Cooper et al., 1998, p. 274) and "the ability to detect problems that the student must develop for every thesis should set out to shed light on the solution to a particular problem" (Anderson et al., 1982, p. 15).

In a study of responding to technical writing, Dragga (1991) suggests that writing supervisor's roles are as judge, coach, or a typical reader. Further Patchan et al. (2009) describe a judge's comments are likely to focus on problems, whereas a coach's comments are likely to focus on solutions. An instructor adopting either of these roles is more likely to provide explanations than someone who has adopted the role of atypical reader. As a judge, a writing instructor tends to focus on how to solve problems with the elements of the prose (such as coherence, organization, or appropriateness to audience) rather than the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the content (Smith, 2003a, 2003b). Other roles of supervisors or mentors, according to Zelditch (1990, p. 11), are

... advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; models of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic.

Ideally, the supervisor also provides a writing role model as an active researcher and publisher (Brown, 1994). Without having experience to research and publish research paper, it is believed that the supervisor is not as competent and effective as those who have this experience. "To supervise

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effectively, one has to be a competent researcher, and be able to reflect on research practices and analyse the knowledge, techniques, and methods that make them effective” (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, n.d.). Delamont et al. (1999) argue that instead of the facilitatory role of supervisors as teachers, it is fallacious to assume that supervisors are necessarily scholarly writers or write regularly themselves.

Role model can be only one of the many other indicators of effective supervision. The other indicators of supervisory effectiveness include supervisory style (correct level of direction, regular meetings, making time for students, interest in project, encourage ideas individuality); supervisor competence with respect to the student project; personal characteristics and attitude of the supervisor (approachable, supportive, positive, open-minded, prepared to acknowledge error, organised, enthusiastic); academic and intellectual standing of the supervisor; that students view their supervisors as mixtures of strengths and weaknesses; and that student-supervisor relationships are highly complex, dynamic and relational (Cullen et al., 1994).

The roles of supervisors are identical with their responsibilities. Being responsible, supervisors need a serious commitment. One of the most important responsibilities of supervisors is to give motivation to the students until they complete their thesis. Murray (2002, pp. 16-17) suggests:

Supervisors should try to motivate you to start writing and to keep writing throughout the project. However, they may not want to put you under too much pressure. They may feel that you have enough to do setting up the research or reading piles of books and papers and may agree to differ writing to a later stage. This may be a mistake. If writing is a part of learning, you will miss out on an opportunity to develop your understanding. If writing is a test of learning, you may have no measure of how you are building up your knowledge.

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The roles and responsibilities of supervisors from Murray (2002), Oliver (2004), Guide on Thesis Supervision (2010-2011), Smith (2003a, 2003b), Zelditch (1990), Patchan et al. (2009), Dragga (1991) can be summarized as follows: a) As guides: Establishing a framework for supervision including arrangements for regular meetings; Meeting with the student regularly following the agreed schedules of minimum meeting is eight times (STPB 2012) and with a clear agenda; They provide guidance about the nature of research from developing a proposal and in the writing of thesis; b) As advisors: They provide advice on the research design, data collection and data analysis, discussing any hazards/problems involved in the research work and how these can best be dealt with; c) As masters: They treat the student professionally; being on the lookout for signs of behavioural changes; d) As managers: They assess supervisory qualities needed and delivering each of the qualities with expertise, ease and care; e) As models: They are active researchers and publishers; f) As sponsors: They become sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; g) As supporters: They give emotional and moral encouragement; h) As tutors: They give specific feedback on writer's performance; i) As coaches: They give comments that are likely to focus on solutions; and j) As judges: Their comments are likely to focus on the problems so that writers become aware of their writing weaknesses. Supervisors are expected to have and to do those ideal roles and responsibilities but it is likely hard to have the perfect ones. The other important responsibility of supervisors is to give feedback during the research supervision.

In this study, supervisor responsibility is to provide guide to write from theses from beginning until the end, to have regular meetings and make sure that the students can produce quality theses and complete the theses within the allocated time.

#### **2.5.4.3. Students' Responsibilities**

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In the writing supervision, it is not only supervisors who have the responsibilities to achieve the goal of writing but also students. Both students and supervisors need to master a range of writing tasks of varying complexity (Brown, 1994). However, it is the responsibility of the student to take the initiative throughout the thesis writing process: raising problems or difficulties, discussing issues arising from feedback, taking appropriate action, and maintaining the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor (MA Programme Director, 2008). Further detailed responsibilities of the students cover: (a) Discussing with his/her thesis supervisor; (b) Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the supervisor; (c) Attending supervisory meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda for the meeting; (d) Making satisfactory academic and research progress following the advice of his/her thesis supervisor; (e) Discussing with and obtaining the approval of his/her thesis supervisor regarding any changes in the direction of his/her research focus and its implications; (f) Providing a brief self-evaluation summary report; (g) Ensuring that his thesis is completed and submitted within the period stipulated by the University for assessment; (h) Abiding by the rules and regulations governing postgraduate studies of the University; and (i) Ensuring that all work done by others which are used in the thesis is properly acknowledged (Guide on Thesis Supervision, 2010-2011, pp. 38-39).

In this research, the responsibilities of students include attending the meetings, taking initiative and completing the thesis on time. Taking initiative includes raising problems or difficulties, discussing issues arising from feedback, taking appropriate action, and maintaining the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor.

#### **2.2.4.4. Student and Supervisor Relationship**

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Relationship between supervisee and his supervisors has become a significant issue in writing supervision. There has been difficulty in managing relationship and the difficulty produces dissatisfactions with the process of supervision. Owlser cited in Green (2005, p.154).) acknowledged that

The difficulty of managing the supervisory relationship is a well-known one. The intensity with which this relationship can be played out reveals that much more is involved than a simple transference of knowledge from one individual to another. On the contrary, each individual is revealed to have complex investments in this relationship.

The difficulty of relationship includes language, culture, and gender. In a study peer response group involving native speakers and non-native speakers, Zhu (2001) found that non-native speakers took fewer turns and produced fewer language functions than native speakers during oral discussions. However, in this research there should be no difficulty of relationship as the students and supervisors speak the same language and have the same culture.

Language was a major factor contributing to the problems between international students and their western supervisors (Adrian-Taylor & Tischler, 2007; McClure, 2005). In their study, Holmes (2005) reported that the Chinese students were reluctant or hesitant to make oral presentations and to speak at research seminars. They feared that their English would not be understood. Culture is another problem in relationship. Supervision relationship is supposed to be intimate and warm. However, it is not simple to build such relationship without involving common cultural context. Academic culture shock, another cultural problem, is experienced by most international research students (Brown, 2004). Huang (2006) suggested that there were considerable different academic culture experienced by international students. However, when the supervisor and supervisee have the same language, culture or gender, it does not guarantee that they have no difficulties in relationship.

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Other relationship dissatisfactions include poor direction and structure of supervision (Acker et al., 1994), the allocation to a supervisor whose interests did not match with those of the student, and insufficient guidance and time scaling (Eggleston & Delamont, 1983; Wright and Lodwick, 1989). The other dissatisfaction that has also been identified as a critical ingredient in the research supervision process is mentoring (Shannon: 1995). Such dissatisfaction rates have been found to be higher in the domain of social sciences than in natural sciences (Young, Fogarty & McRea, 1987). In Australia, the satisfaction ratings of supervisors were about 54% for part-time students and 64% for full-time doctoral students (Harman, 2002). This means that almost half of part-time students were not satisfied with the supervisors and more than one third of full-time doctoral students were neither satisfied with the supervisors.

The relationship has been acknowledged as an important factor directly influencing the success or failure of postgraduate studies (Symons, 2001; Seagram et al., 1998). Most researchers agree that completing a writing program is a process that depends on a close, working relationship between supervisees and supervisors (Abiddin, 2007). Blumberg (1978) suggested that trust, warmth and honest collaboration are key elements in successful supervision. One study in particular indicated that satisfaction with supervision correlated higher with the students' perceptions of the supervisory relationships than with perceived expertise (Heppner & Handley, 1981). Armstrong (2004, p. 600) states that

... relationships with supervisors are also known to be related to the satisfaction and productivity that students find in their supervision, are known to be critical for successful completion, and are regarded by most graduate students as the single most important aspect of the quality of their research experience.

Building a good relationship between supervisors and supervisees is a key aspect to face writing problems. Moses (1985) states that most supervisory problems can be overcome if there is a clear and open communication on all aspects of the

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project, and if there is a structure without a framework for supervision which facilitates the development and creativity of the student.

In this study, students and supervisors relationship satisfaction is when there is a clear and open communication and a trust, warmth and honest collaboration and an understanding relationship in the supervision.

### **2.2.5. Feedback strategies**

Feedback strategy is defined as the designed plans for providing substantive information (and often personalized) responses to learners in their work performance (Hatziapostolou & Paraskakis, 2010). Feedback strategies as mentioned above contain timing, amount, mode, and audience (Brookhart, 2008).

#### **2.2.5.1. Timing**

The timing-of-feedback is meant as whether feedback is delivered immediately or delayed (Shute, 2007). The purpose of giving immediate feedback is to help students hear right after and use the feedback while students are still thoughtful of the topic, or performance progress in question. Feedback is needed while students still think of the learning goal as a learning goal—that is, something they are still striving for, not something they already did (Brookhart, 2008). When feedback is not provided timely, it is “as nearly as damaging as providing no feedback at all” (Irons 2008, p. 83). Cowan (2003) suggests that the most effective feedback is provided ‘within minutes’ of students completing a task. Not providing feedback on time may upset students and will probably have minimal impact on their learning.

Further Brookhart (2008) suggests effective feedback timing is meant as: a) to provide immediate feedback for knowledge of facts (right/wrong); b) to delay feedback slightly for more comprehensive reviews of student thinking and processing; c. Never to delay feedback beyond when it would make a difference

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to students; and d) provide feedback as often as is practical, for all major assignments; (e) Meeting with the student regularly following the agreed schedules and with a clear agenda; (Guide on Thesis Supervision, 2010-2011, pp. 35-37), The school regulations (STPB, 2012) states the minimum meeting is eight times.

However, Thalheimer (2008) points out that the research is not clear about which is better between immediate and delayed feedback. It favours delayed feedback as it produces the same advantages as spaced learning. There are some advantages of delayed feedback: a) The spaced learning as a result of delayed feedback requires more effortful cognitive processing; b) Spaced learning provides learners with more varied repetition contexts; c) Delayed feedback essentially provides a spaced learning opportunity; d) Delayed feedback is more likely to be processed at a deep level than immediate feedback; e) Delayed feedback also provides learners with at least two background contexts: the retrieval context and the feedback context (Thalheimer, 2008, pp. 37-38). Immediate feedback provides also some advantages: a) to prevent learners from reinforcing inappropriate conceptions after retrieval practice; b) may help learners overcome interference by creating relatively stronger bonds between retrieval situations and their appropriate responses than delayed feedback can produce (Thalheimer, 2008, p. 39).

There has been a series of findings that delayed feedback was better than immediate feedback (Sturges, 1972; Phye & Andre, 1989). In their research on feedback timing, Sassenrath and Yonge (1968) gave a test immediately after giving feedback and then a second test was given 24 hours later. On the immediate test, learners who got delayed feedback performed the same as learners who got immediate feedback. However, learners who got delayed feedback performed better than learners who got immediate feedback.

In the research related to the feedback timing, research reviews have come to different conclusions. Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, and Morgan (1991), Azevedo

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and Bernard (1995) and Mory (2004) concluded that immediate feedback is better, whereas Kulhavy and Stock (1989) concluded that delayed was better. However, all the pro-immediate-feedback reviews fail to consider the importance of the length of the retention interval. This may be a mistake because delayed feedback appears to work in a similar manner to the spacing effect, which has been clearly shown to create benefits for long-term retention intervals, and much less often for short retention intervals (Dempster, 1996 and Thalheimer, 2006). In this case, we can say that we cannot expect advantages for delayed feedback over immediate feedback for short retention intervals; we can expect advantages due to delayed feedback's spacing benefits for more long-term retention.

In this study, the effective feedback timing is when it is delivered immediate feedback for knowledge of facts (Shute, 2007) or delayed feedback slightly for more comprehensive reviews of student thinking and processing, appropriate duration and frequency.

#### **2.2.5.2. Amount**

In the teacher's view, the target of feedback is to achieve of all learning goals perfectly. In a real learning, teacher's feedback is expected to have usable amount of information that connects with something students already know and takes them from that point to the next level. However, balancing the amount (quantity) and quality of feedback with the pressures of time and workload is important (Irons, 2007). Judging the right amount of feedback to give (how much and on how many points) requires deep knowledge and teacher's consideration. Good feedback means that teachers have to "prioritize—pick the most important points, to choose points that relate to major learning goals and to consider the student's developmental level" (Brookhart, 2008, p. 5). While bad feedback includes when every error in mechanics is edited and when comments more voluminous than the paper itself (Brookhart: 2008, p. 13). Further, Hairston (1986) argues that providing excessive amounts of feedback is ultimately harmful to both teachers

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and students. For teachers, it inevitably leads to burnout, frustration, and resentment. For students, it leads to “cognitive overload” and (psychologically) “defensive barriers” (pp. 120–121).

Although excessive feedback can be harmful, a few studies suggest that instructions to learners to expect a real-world task without feedback may help them overcome the negative effects of redundant or excessive feedback (Lavery, 1964, reported by Salmoni, Schmidt & Walter, 1984, p. 375). A number of studies argue that redundant feedback with environmental stimuli should be used sparingly, or intermittently, or not at all (Magill, 1993; Salmoni, Schmidt, & Walter, 1984). As feedback is viewed as guidance, such guidance can prompt learners to ignore the stimuli they will need to monitor when they are faced strong. These stimuli were found in a large number of experimental situations (Thalheimer, 2008).

Some researchers felt that most movement learning tasks benefited from providing less feedback rather than more feedback. However, one recent study has found that the most complex skills may benefit from more feedback, at least initially in the learning process (Wulf, Shea, & Matschiner, 1998). As it is the only research, it may need more research to support the finding. Magill (1993) suggests that beginners benefit from significant amounts of feedback early in the process of learning movement skills. Redundant feedback, although harmful for most learners, is beneficial for beginners because it enables them to get a feel for how their new movements are creating their effects (Thalheimer, 2008). Recent evidence shows that complex skills may require more feedback rather than less feedback (Wulf, Shea, & Matschiner, 1998). When beginners face new learning situations, they usually confront complexities they have not dealt with before. If complex tasks benefit from more feedback, then beginners dealing with new complexities are likely to benefit from more feedback as well.

In this study, feedback amount refers to the usable amount of information that connects with the content quality, form (writing mechanism) and the amount

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of correction. Balance amount of content quality and form of feedback with the pressures of time and workload is important (Irons, 2007).

### **2.2.5.3. Modes**

Feedback can be delivered in different modalities such as oral, written, or computer mediated/visual/demonstration (Brookhart, 2008; Biber et al., 2011). Some of the best feedback can result from conversations with the student (Brookhart, 2008). Johnston (2004) suggests decisions about whether to give the feedback orally or in written form should be partly based on the students' reading ability, especially for younger students. Race (1994) suggests that the majority academics and students to describe what helped them learn highlighted practice, trial and error, and having a go and experimenting. He noted that to allow learners to make mistakes in a constructive environment is an essential part of learning. A powerful contributor to this learning process is that student will be more likely to experiment and take risks. There are three modes of feedback: oral, written and electronic (Brookhart, 2008; Coffin et al, 2000; King, 2011; Biber et al., 2011).

#### **2.2.5.3.1. Oral feedback**

Oral feedback is almost the same as written feedback in terms of the contents. The difference is that instead of writing, supervisors have less time to make decisions about how to say things, and once they have said them they can't take them back (Brookhart, 2008, p. 47). However, oral feedback or comment can be repetitive as wanted to make sure that the supervisees can follow the message. It minimizes miscommunication although without written record (Guffey et al. (2006). It can be clearer, more detailed, and more understandable to students than written comments and key points can be clearly explained and elaborated on more quickly via speaking than writing (Jordan, 2004). Murray (1985), Harris (1986),

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Sperling (1990), Arndt (1993), Brender (1998), Reesor (2002) in Lee (2008) point out that face-to-face oral feedback is effective and practical, participatory, interactive, dynamic, immediate and mutual. As the students get more detail, they are more likely to ask further questions. Similarly, Nah (2008) suggests that oral communication allows for immediate feedback such as the opportunity to ask questions when the meaning is not entirely clear and the teacher or sender is able to check and see if the message is clear or has created confusion.

Spoken communication is flexible and adaptable to diverse situations. It can be done through face to face or using electronic devices such as hand phone or telephone. It may motivate students to learn. The motivation may come from the personal nature of the voice comments and the way the comment is conveyed, which encourages students to give serious consideration to the feedback. Jordan (2004) in her study on the use of oral feedback found that recording voice comment is more personal and helpful for the students. The tone of her voice combined with the content of her comments conveys much more than only written comments.

The voice recording allows her to give positive feedback on a correct question, even if it is the only question a student gets right. This method also permits her to summarize a student's performance and to suggest a few manageable remediation goals to the student. However, oral feedback which is influenced by both verbal and non-verbal communication such as tone or body language may skew the meaning of the message in the mind of the receiver (Nah, 2008).

Further, Lee in her study on student reactions to teacher feedback suggests that post-writing oral feedback should have been intended to help students develop more positive attitudes to error feedback as she found that that the oral feedback have caused apprehension among students, especially because such feedback was delivered in a mechanical, discouraging, and oppressive manner, as

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observed in the lessons. The teacher's personality (and attitude to student errors in writing) might be another crucial factor that explains the students' different attitudes to error feedback (Lee, 2008).

#### **2.2.5.3.2. Written feedback**

Written feedback refers to the information given on the page: the location, the layout, and the writing implementations (Coffin et al., 2003, p. 119). The written comments from the teacher are on different aspects of the written tasks in the margins, spaces between paragraphs or at the end (Khan cited in Karim & Ivy 2011). The comments are in the forms words and phrases to present teacher's intention and to value the student as a person who learns to support him/her in seeing her/himself with a scholar's identity (self-efficacy for learning) and as active and strategic in managing that learning (self-regulation) and to help him/her decide what to do next (Brookhart, 2008, p. 32). The written words and phrases are personalised comments and a grade. Teachers believe that the awarding of a grade has a subtle yet profound influence on written feedback and the influence can be seen not only through comments that justify the grade, but also in dictating a way of thinking that parallels the feedback (Edlin, 2011).

Written feedback is given either in red pen or pencil (Coffin et al., 2003, p. 119). Pencilled comments are seen as relatively tentative, and open to negotiation and red pen comment is the symbol of teachers' superior knowledge and their right to make unchallengeable judgement (Ivanic et al., 2000, p. 5). Nah (2008) suggests some advantages of written feedback in communication that include : (a) Written communication is good for complicated and vital instructions, which can be given in a precise and uniform manner; (b) There is a lesser chance for the message to be misunderstood; (c) Written instructions can be checked at a later date. It serves as a useful reference; and (d) Authority is transmitted more effectively with a written order than with an oral one. Guffey et al. (2006)

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underlines that written communication provides permanent records and can be read again and again but lacks immediate feedback. Written comment has also some disadvantages: (a) It is impersonal; (b) Students may not always read them; and (c) It does not always answer questions and there is no immediate feedback (Nah, 2008). Similarly, McAlpine (1989) suggests that the student as a reader of a written comment enters into a dialogue with the teacher/writer in which the interlocutors are removed in time and space from each other. For that reason, the student who receives the message cannot negotiate the meaning directly with the teachers as in an oral communication. It means that students are forced to negotiate or interpret meaning by talking themselves through the written document. Moreover, written comments are often mysterious and, depending on the handwriting, difficult to read or understand (Jordan, 2004).

#### **2.2.5.3.3. Electronic feedback**

The development of educational technology provides learners with the means where they can gain a kind of electronic feedback to automated feedback provided by a computer (Ware & Warschauer, 2006). The nature of constructive feedback is verbal and informal. That can be done only by talking live to the target recipient, either face-to-face — or by electronic media when the sender and the receiver physically cannot be together (Brounstein, 2014). Computer is not the only electronic media but mobile phone is nowadays the most popular media for communication. Mobile phone can be used for both oral and written communication.

The ways in which electronic feedback could help not only overcome traditional feedback problems but also more importantly improve student thesis as well. In addition, using electronic tools to enhance writing instruction is viewed as an opportunity to broaden the students' general level of knowledge, improve their critical thinking skills and a path to improve their electronic literacy

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considered as being “critical to success” in modern society (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, p. 171).

The other benefits of electronic feedback include increasing student writing output, enhancing student motivation, providing non-threatening environment, making paper more readily available for sharing and the dynamics of oral interaction allow more free-flowing discussion and result in more global changes to writing, such as general refocusing of direction, purpose, or organisation (Ware & Warschauer, 2006).

In this study, the modes of feedback include oral, written and electronic media especially cellular phone. The modes are effective when they increase student writing output, enhance student motivation, provide non-threatening environment.

#### **2.2.5.4. Audience**

To be able to communicate with students as audience, a teacher should know who they are. Feedback will work best if the teacher has a strong and appropriate sense of the audience. The audience is classified into individuals and groups (Brookhart, 2008).

##### **2.2.5.4.1. Individual feedback**

Individual feedback is any information provided for an individual about his performance or individual work. It focuses on specific group members and their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Keyton, 2006). Feedback about the specific individual work is best addressed to the individual student to show that the teacher cares about student’s individual progress (Brookhart, 2008). There have been a number of studies on individual feedback. Archer-Kath et al. (1994) in their study on individual versus group feedback in cooperative groups found that individual feedback was more effective than group feedback in increasing students’

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achievement motivation, actual achievement, uniformity achievement, among group members and influence towards higher achievement within cooperative learning group.

Next, Smith (1972) found that feedback provided on an individual basis was more effective than group feedback. Feedback also was more effective when it was perceived as applying to the individual rather than to the group as a whole. Then, Archer-Kath et al. (1994) in their study on individual versus group feedback in cooperative group, individual feedback was given to pupils even if they were in a group, it was found that their attitudes towards the teachers and the subject matter and their group became more positive.

Camp et al., (2010) in their research on comparative efficacy of group and individual feedback using pre-intervention and post-intervention professionalism scores indicated that the students receiving feedback in a one-on-one setting (student and instructor) were more likely to demonstrate higher scores on subsequent evaluations as compared with those students receiving feedback in a group setting (all team members and one instructor). Their findings suggest that providing feedback to first-year medical students on an individual basis is the best way to improve professional attitudes and behaviours. However Toner (2012) in his study on The Impact of Individual and Group Feedback on Environmental Intentions and Self-Beliefs, participants expressed the greatest intentions to behave proenvironmentally, especially with behaviours that require a high level of commitment, when their personal feedback was worse than that of their group.

#### **2.2.5.4.2. Group feedback**

Group feedback is any feedback given to the whole group members. Both individual and group feedback has positive impacts. Numerous studies have generally indicated that under most conditions groups are more productive than that are individual (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin et al. 1984).

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Ryack in Charliepeu (2011) found that 2-men learning groups did significantly better learning lists of nonsense words than did individuals learning. However it was found that the length of the lists also played a part in how many words were remembered. Further, Crook (1998) found that there was no difference between individual learning and group learning except that groups spent longer practising the task in hand, but with no effect in grades or retrieval. However, providing feedback to group can save time and also serve as a review session (Brookhart, 2008, p. 17).

Magney (1997) found through a survey of teachers their preference to use the method for practical work, as workshops and laboratories that a group is capable to engage into more complicated subjects than individuals could afford. That's why "collaborative learning" appears to be more efficient in those subjects that require a great amount of work, especially if many different activities or steps (for example research, discuss, analyze, write and present) are involved (MLA Citation, 2013).

In non-academic research, Vasquez et al. (1993) found that people learned more information in a group compared to learning individually. When mistakes were made in the group situation, they were corrected from multiple perspectives, and also corrected faster than the individual learners (Seifert & Hutchins, 1992). However in the classroom, it is better to have smaller classes, as students benefit from working in smaller groups as they can learn more difficult information in this setting (Magney, 1997). Students have stated that their least favourite way of learning is the individual method, and teachers stated that they favoured the group approach and also found that small group learning had a positive effect on task performance and individual performance (Chen, 2002; Lou et al., 2001).

In this paper, feedback audience consists of individual and group students who come to the supervisors to gain feedback for their draft of thesis. The

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feedback is effective when the supervisors have a strong and appropriate sense of the audience.

### **2.2.6. Feedback Contents**

Feedback contents cover the feedback provided by supervisors in terms of: focus, comparison, function, valence, clarity, specificity and tone (Brookhart, 2008).

#### **2.2.6.1. Focus**

A focus feedback is defined as “information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour to improve learning” (Shute, 2007). Fazio (2001) and Sheen (2007) contend that focused feedback which applies to particular language forms is the most efficient. However, we still need to decide which language form to focus on as other writers suggest that focus feedback is too limited to improve a learner’s writing skills and that they need unfocused feedback on a number of errors in order to improve (Ruegg, 2010) Focus feedback is classified into feedback on the work itself, feedback on the process the student used to do the work, feedback on the student’s self-regulation and feedback on the student personally (Brookhart, 2008).

In this study, effective feedback focus is when the information communicated to the students is intended to modify their thinking or behavior to improve learning (Shute, 2007). The information provided is on the work itself, on the process, on the work, on the student’s self-regulation and on the student personally (Brookhart, 2008).

##### **2.2.6.1.1. On the work itself**

It is a type of feedback to indicate specific error types for correction. Many teachers are aware of form (surface) and meaning (functions) dichotomy of writing. Teachers are suggested to avoid over-attending to form and respond

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more to meaning (Zamel, 1985) although it is hard to separate between form and functions. There is a place to correct form but choosing to only give focused feedback on a few drafts throughout a writing course could be argued to deprive students of critically needed input on an issue that could ultimately make or break those (Ferris, 2003a).

Goldstein (2006) identifies five main areas of feedback focus: the students' ideas, students' control of form, students' ability to use appropriate academic writing and research conventions, their approach to the processes of writing, and global issues related to their entire essay. The five categories should be seen how interpersonal issues affect the ways the teacher constructed their comments and suggestions in different focus area (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The feedback focus should be made more specific. Being selective is very important not to overwhelm the students with the amount of correction made in their drafts and to let the teacher save some time on commenting on the students' papers, which is one of the most time-consuming activities anyway.

There have been a lot of studies dealing with the aspects of feedback focus on lexis, grammar, mechanics, organization, and content. However, much of the feedback research has focused on error correction. For instance, Ferris (1999) divided errors into two classes, which are labelled treatable and untreatable. Treatable errors are those that can be addressed through explicit instruction and include language features such as article usage and subject-verb agreement. Untreatable errors are those that are less readily teachable in that they are not governed by a clear or simple set of rules. Problems with word choice are one example Ferris gave of such untreatable errors.

Unfortunately, teacher's comments do not always address exactly student's problems or mistakes that need clarification or suggestion in the language use. Moreover, many student writers need/want clear guidance/comments on their language problems, especially as they reach more

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advanced levels of writing proficiency (Leki, 2006). Feedback on the accuracy is relatively easy to be provided, but the problem is that we want to provide feedback to improve more in student writing proficiency or more on text content, organization, or audience/purpose (Biber et al., 2011). It will become a challenge for supervisors to provide more feedback on the meaning than accuracy.

#### **2.2.6.1.2. On the process**

This feedback is aimed at the process used to create a product or a complete task or at the processing of information, or writing process requiring understanding or completing a task (Hattie and Timperley (2007). This feedback concerns information about relations in the environment, relations perceived by a person, and relations between the environment and the person's perceptions that need deep understanding (Balzer et al., 1989). A deep understanding of learning involves the construction of meaning and relates more to the relationships, cognitive processes and transference to other harder tasks (Purdie, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996).

In this process feedback, students need strategies to detect their own errors. They can choose different error correction strategies that are more effective. Their engagement in error correction strategies depends on their motivation to continue to pursue their goal or to reduce the gap between current knowledge and the goal (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Early et al., (1990, p. 103) suggests that “using process feedback with goal setting appears to be a direct and powerful way of shaping an individual's task strategy, and using outcome feedback is much less efficient way of shaping strategy” .

#### **2.2.6.1.3. On the self-regulation**

Self-regulation that involves interplay between commitment, control, and confidence addresses the way students monitor, direct, and regulate actions

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toward the learning goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It regulates autonomy, self-control, self direction, and self discipline. This regulation involves “self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goal (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 14). Their self-regulation becomes their self-monitor or self- assessment skills. When students have self-assessment skills they can evaluate their level of understanding, their effort and strategies used on tasks their attributions and opinions of others about their performance, and their improvement in relation to their goal and expectations (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

#### **2.2.6.1.4. On the student personally**

Personal feedback contains little task-related information and is rarely converted into more engagement, commitment to the learning goals, enhanced self-efficacy, or understanding about the task and expresses positive and sometimes negative feedback and affect about the student (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Positive feedback such as praise is not always effective as it carries little information that provides answers and often disturbs student attention and becomes not focus on the task (Brophy, 1981). Kluger & DeNisi (1996) on their research on personal feedback show that there is not any praise that has greater impact on achievement. However, it does not mean that students do not like praise. Sharp (1985) in her study found out that adolescent students preferred to be praised publicly (26%), to be praised quietly and privately (64%) and preferred teachers to say nothing when they achieved on an academic task. Burnett (2002) and Elwel & Tiberio (1994) in their studies showed similar percentage among elementary students, they preferred praised for trying hard rather than for having high ability and for achievement rather than for behaviour.

In this study, effective feedback focus is when the information communicated to the students is intended to modify their thinking or behaviour to

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improve learning (Shute, 2007). The information provided is on the work itself, on the process, on the work, on the student's self-regulation and on the student personally (Brookhart, 2008).

### **2.2.6.2. Comparison**

Comparison feedback consists of criterion referenced, norm-referenced and self-referenced (Brookhart, 2008).

#### **2.2.6.2.1. Criterion-referenced feedback**

Criterion-referenced feedback is comparing student performance to a standard in relation to test scores, norm-referenced feedback is comparing student performance to that of other students, and self-referenced feedback is comparing their achievement with their past achievements (Brookhart, 2008, pp. 22-23, Youyan, 2013).

Criterion-referenced feedback provides information by comparing student achievement with a learning target or standard (Youyan, 2013). This feedback makes judgements more about performance than on people. It assesses the extent to which a student has achieved the intended learning objectives and performance outcomes of a subject (Connolly, 2004) based on an institution thesis writing guide book as the standard rubrics. Criterion-referencing is different from norm-referencing as it is a system for awarding marks and it is fundamentally opposed to norm-referencing as it is open to situations in which everyone fails or everyone gets grade 'A' (Knight, 2001, Connolly, 2004). Knight (2001, p. 17) suggests that criterion-referenced assessment has some potential advantages such as: to make it possible to give learners feedback which identifies what they need to do in order to get better marks; to make assessment feed out informative, identifying exactly what learners have achieved; to make it possible to give feedback on complex work with some reliability; to provide agreed standards expressed in a shared

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language that together serve as points of reference for markers to use when trying to put marks to students' work; and to make judgements about the quality and quantity of learning.

Criterion referenced feedback has often been adopted recently as it seeks a fairer and more accountable assessment than norm referencing. Learners are measured based on identified standards of achievement not based on the rank of other students. It means that the quality of achievement is assessed individually based on specific criteria and standards but not compared with how well other students have performed. Regarding to the accountability of the qualities and achievements of students assessment, Dunn et al., (2002) suggest that there must be transparency and negotiability in the process of assessment by which grades are awarded, an acknowledgement of subjectivity and the exercise of professional judgement in marking.

#### **2.2.6.2.2. Norm-referenced feedback**

Norm-referenced feedback shows information on the relative comparison of student achievement with others (Youyan, 2013). Norm-referenced feedback is comparative, giving information that a student is better than the other (s), for example, the second best student is better than the third and the fourth. It is normative in the sense that the grades awarded reflect students' rank order and expectations about the proportion of A's, B's, C's, etc. that it is reasonable to award (Knight, 2001).

A norm-referenced feedback or assessment makes judgements about people, expresses students' scores in rank order, based on a distribution of scores. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) in their research examined that when feedback is provided to students in a norm-referenced manner which compares the individual's performance to the others, students who have poor performance tend

to attribute their failures to lack of ability, expect to perform poorly in the future, and demonstrate decreased motivation on subsequent tasks.

### **2.2.6.2.3. Self-referenced feedback**

Self-referenced feedback provides information on how much students have improved by comparing their achievement with their past achievements (Youyan, 2013). McColskey & Leary (1985) examined the hypothesis that the harmful effects of failure might be lessened when failure is expressed in self-referenced terms. In this research, they found that learners received feedback which was described as either norm-referenced or as self-referenced feedback, indicating that they did well or poorly on an anagram test. The results showed that, compared to norm-referenced feedback, self-referenced feedback resulted in higher expectancies regarding future performance and increased attributions to effort. This finding suggests that students who have poor achievements should be given self-referenced feedback that focuses their attention on their own particular progress

Ilies and Judge (2005) examined different types of feedback especially self-referenced and peer-referenced feedback that influence subsequent goals predicted within individuals. One group was given self-referenced feedback referring to their own performance while the other group was given peer-referenced feedback relative to others' performance. The results show that when feedback was negative, both self-referenced and peer-referenced feedback did predict subsequent goals. However, when positive feedback was given, only the self-referenced feedback predicted subsequent goals. This study suggests that manipulating types of feedback can have an impact on students' orientations to learning.

In this study, effective comparison feedback is comparing student performance to a standard in relation to criterion referenced, norm-referenced and

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self-referenced. Criterion-referenced feedback is comparing student performance to test scores, norm-referenced feedback is comparing student performance to that of other students, and self-referenced feedback is comparing their achievement with their past achievements (Brookhart, 2008, pp. 22-23).

### **2.2.6.3. Functions**

The functions of feedback are to evaluate progress, performance or achievement, to encourage and support, and to learn high-quality work and how it might be achieved (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Similarly Askew (2000) suggests that feedback is given and received in the belief that the student as a recipient will be able to adjust subsequent performances. It is assumed that the teacher who gives the information knows more than the student who receives it, that the student receiving the information does not already know it, that he wants to hear the information and this knowledge will lead to improvement.

Further, Coffin et al. (2003, p. 104) suggest more detailed functions of feedback as follows: to support students' writing development, to teach a particular aspect of disciplinary content, to teach specific academic writing conventions, to indicate strengths and weaknesses of writing, to explain or justify a grade, and to suggest how student may improve in their writing. Another function of feedback includes those that help a student 'discover one's own standpoint', 'gain recognition for one's "own work"', and 'find ways of expressing it in one's "own voice' (Sofoulis, 1997, p. 11). Hyland (2009, p. 132) added that the function of feedback is to help students understand 'the norms and values of their particular disciplines, and thus facilitates students' enculturation into disciplinary literacies and epistemologies'.

The functions of feedback include descriptive (Brookhart, 2008; Jinguji, 2008; Black and William, 1998b), evaluative or judgmental feedback (Davies,

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2003; Black and William, 1998a; Oluwatayo and Fatoba, 2010), formative (Shute, 2007; Race, 2001; Yorke, 2003) and corrective (Lighbown & Spada 1999; Lalande, 1982; Ferris, 1995b; Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999; Polio et al., 1998; and Kepner, 1991).

In this study, effective functions of feedback are to evaluate progress, performance or achievement, to encourage and support, and to learn high-quality work and how it might be achieved (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The functions are divided into descriptive, evaluative or judgmental, formative and corrective.

#### **2.2.6.3.1. Descriptive feedback**

Descriptive feedback refers to specific information in the form of written comments or conversations that help the learner understand what she or he needs to do in order to improve her or his thesis. The descriptive feedback is measured by the specific standards for an excellent performance in which the successes and errors are identified and provides students a clear picture of their progress towards their learning goals and how they can improve (Jinguji, 2008). To develop self-learning and support the transfer of learning, students must develop the ability to provide their own descriptive feedback and should be able to identify biomechanical factors that influence the desired outcomes (Black and William, 1998b).

Descriptive feedback is important because most students will not initially perform at a high level, but will improve based upon the number of trials, amount of practice and adjustments that are made based upon the feedback and additional practice (Jinguji, 2008). Davies (2003) suggests that descriptive feedback that supports learning: a) comes during, as well as after, the learning; b) is easily understandable and related directly to the learning; c) is specific so performance can improve; d) involves choice on the part of the learner as to what and how to receive feedback; e) is part of an ongoing conversation about learning; f) is in

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comparison to models, exemplars or descriptions; and g) is about the performance or the work, not the person

Lipnevich & Smith (2008) examined descriptive feedback which focuses students' attention on their work rather than the self. The result shows that descriptive feedback is the most advantageous kind of information that should be provided to students. The benefit of such feedback occurs at all levels of performance. Classroom teachers are trying to build in more quality descriptive feedback but the problem is that as long as teachers see themselves as the sole source of feedback, students will not receive as much descriptive feedback as they need to learn (Davies, 2003).

Barry & Hickman (2008) examined descriptive feedback among students. They found that having the students give each other descriptive feedback avoided making evaluative judgments on each other and it gave them more information to share with that student, their parents, and other teacher as well about how my students were learning. Classroom research shows that when students are involved in the assessment process, increase the amount of descriptive feedback students receive, and decrease the amount of evaluative feedback they receive, students learn significantly more (Black and William, 1998a). Descriptive feedback is not self-assessment; rather it is a reflection on what the students have learned and for each student to be aware of his or her own learning processes (Rodgers, 2006).

In this study, descriptive feedback is specific information in the form of written comments or conversations that help the students understand what they need to do in order to improve their theses.

#### **2.2.6.3.2. Evaluative feedback**

Evaluative feedback is a summary for the learner of how well she or he has performed on a particular task or during a term and is often in the form of letter

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grades, numbers, check marks, or other descriptors or coded symbols (Black & William, 1998a). It can be positive such as rewards and praise, or negative such as punishment and criticism, and descriptive such as positive intention and constructive criticism. Further, Black & William (1998a) suggest that evaluative feedback tells learners how they compare to others, provides a judgment summarizing the quality of the learning and is a direct result of summative assessment.

Evaluative feedback is different from descriptive feedback as it is reported in summary form using letters, numbers, checks, or other symbols. Students may understand whether or not they need to improve but unless descriptive feedback is provided, students do not get enough information to understand what they need to do in order to improve (Davies, 2003). Evaluative feedback tells learners how they have performed as compared to others and is sometimes given rewards and punishments such as grades or other consequences. Researchers advise teachers to seek to improve student learning (Black and William, 1998a) to reduce the amount of evaluative feedback and increase the amount of descriptive feedback (Davies, 2003)

Oluwatayo and Fatoba (2010) examined effects of evaluative feedback on performance and retention. The results of this study show that evaluative feedback had positive effect on students' performance and retention in Biology achievement test. Odu (2010) examined evaluation feedback as a predictor of students' achievement. This study showed that students receiving comprehensive evaluative feedback of their examination results rather than the traditionally less-comprehensive feedback in terms of letter or numerical grades obtained a significantly higher level of cognitive achievement. Evaluative feedback in the form of grades may be helpful if no other options are available and can beneficially be accompanied by some form of encouragement (Lipnevich & Smith, 2008).

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Vercauteren (2009) in his review about evaluative feedback argues that one of the factors that block student learning is the tendency for teachers to assess quantity and presentation rather than the quality of student learning. This study focused on the range of ‘rewards and punishments’, and ‘approval and disapproval’ and the teacher responses to student work were frequently to do with effort, presentation and accuracy. These examples of evaluative feedback were mainly positive such as praising, rewarding rather than negative such as critics, punishing and disapproving responses. This kind of evaluative feedback is mostly directed to the self as a person and lacks specific links to either the learning or the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Next, it will discuss evaluative feedback that consists of summative evaluation and formative feedback but only formative feedback is discussed as summative evaluation is more on teaching evaluation.

In this study evaluative feedback is a summary for how well students’ thesis writing performance that is indicated by the supervisors in the forms description or symbols.

#### **2.2.6.3.3. Formative feedback**

The next function of feedback is formative. It is defined as information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner’s thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning (Shute, 2007, Race, 2001). Formative feedback is provided to respond students’ works on formative assessment such essays, reports, and the other written assignments. The basic principle behind formative assessment is to ‘contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance’ (Yorke, 2003, p. 478). Formative feedback provides information to teachers and students about how students are doing relative to classroom learning goals. This formative feedback

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communication is an important process that may encourage or discourage students' attention in the feedback. To make formative feedback effective, it should be multidimensional, non-evaluative, supportive, timely, specific, credible, infrequent, and genuine (Schwartz & White, 2000). In other words, it needs to be timely, constructive, motivational, personal, manageable and directly related to assessment criteria and learning outcomes (Race, 2001; Juwah, 2004, Irons, 2008). Learning outcomes can be promoted in formative feedback by an appropriate strategy that focuses on the contents and the method to communicate the contents of the feedback to students.

To enhance the learning outcomes, formative feedback can be delivered by a teacher in traditional way or by computer in electronic way. The traditional way of communication, which does not seem to be efficient, includes handwritten comments on students' assessed work and print-out feedback returned to students. Electronic feedback method ranges from simple techniques such as email comments to students to more sophisticated that allow supervisors to put comments and annotations to electronically submitted work (Hatzia Apostolou & Paraskakis, 2010, p. 111). The main goal of formative feedback, either delivered in handwritten and/or computer, in the classroom or elsewhere, is to enhance learning or performance producing the formation of accurate, targeted conceptualizations and skills (Shute, 2007).

Feedback is effective when the procedures employed by teachers powerfully impact the achievement of their students (Dale, 2010). If students are not able to use the feedback to produce improved work by re-doing the same assignment, no one will know that it has been effective (Boud, 2000). Some studies report that elaborative feedback produces significantly greater learning among students compared with feedback containing less information (Moreno, 2004; Pridemore & Klein; 1995; Shute, 2006). There are three essential elements of effective feedback: recognition of desired goal, evidence about present

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position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between two (Sadler, 1989; Black & William, 1998b).

The effectiveness of formative feedback is influenced by a number of factors, including the ability of students to self-assess, giving students clear goals and criteria, and setting out expected standards; the encouragement of teacher and peer dialogue around learning; closure of the ‘feedback loop’; the provision of quality feedback information; and the encouragement in students of positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

In this study, formative feedback is defined as information communicated to the students that is intended to modify the students’ behaviour for the purpose of improving learning.

#### **2.2.6.3.4. Corrective feedback**

The other function of feedback is corrective. It is any indication to learners by teachers that their use of the target language is incorrect (Lighbown & Spada 1999). Error correction is to prevent fossilization (Lalande, 1982), to focus on patterns of error that can be addressed productively (Ferris, 1995b). However, all error corrections are recommended to be eliminated because it is unnecessary, ineffective and even counterproductive (Truscott, 1996). Those arguments were premature as effective error correction can and does help at least some student writers if it is selective, prioritised and clear (Ferris, 1999)

There have been a number of studies that have attempted to examine whether second language (L2) students who receive corrective feedback on their errors are able to improve the accuracy of their writing in comparison with those who receive error feedback. Polio et al. (1998) and Kepner (1991) pointed out that there was not any difference in the writing accuracy of students. On the other hand, Fathman & Whalley (1990) found that fewer grammatical errors were made by students who received error feedback. For those reasons, there has been

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controversy among researchers whether teachers should provide accuracy correction such as grammar to student writers or whether such feedback has any short-or long-term effect on student writing (Ferris, 2006). It is argued that research findings against grammar correction does not demonstrate any positive effect for correction in writing even the time spent for correction is harmful to student writers as it spends time and energy not on the writing concerns (Truscott, 1996). Teachers' corrective feedback which may be not complete, not consistent and not accurate is predicted to be ineffective (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990).

**Direct feedback.** Direct feedback is the provision of the linguistic form by teacher to students or provides the student with the correct form directly (Tardy, 2006). Direct or explicit feedback occurs when the teacher identifies an error and provides the correct form (Bitchener & Young, 2005). There are a number of different forms of direct corrective feedback such as crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme, inserting a missing word or morpheme, and writing the correct form above or near to the erroneous form (Ferris, 2006). The feedback information which is often about strengths and weaknesses of handed in work or about aspects of performance are easy to identify (such as spelling mistakes) rather than about aspects that are of greater importance to academic learning but that are more abstract and difficult to define (such as strength of argument) (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004, p. 11).

**Indirect feedback.** Indirect strategies refer to situations when the teacher indicates that an error has been made but does not provide a correction, thereby leaving the student to diagnose and correct it (Tardy, 2006). This can be done by underlining the errors or using cursors to show omissions in the student's text or by placing a cross in the margin next to the line containing the error (Ellis, 2009). Indirect error feedback is preferable as it forces students to engage in guided learning and problem solving (Lalande, 1982) and helps them build their skills as independent self –editors (Bates et al., 1993). However, students at lower levels

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may not have sufficient linguistic knowledge of self-corrective errors (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). According to (Ruegg, 2010, p. 248) indirect feedback varies in degrees such as

(a) indicating both the location and type of the error but leaving the student to decide how to correct it, (b) indicating the type of error but not the location and leaving the student to find the error, (c) indicating the location of the error but not the type and leaving the student to establish what the error is, (d) indicating which line the error occurs in but not the type or exact location and leaving the student to locate where exactly on the line the error is and what it is, (e) indicating which line the error occurs on and the type of error and leaving the student to infer where exactly on the line the error is and how to correct it, as well as many other variations.

Studies examining the effect of indirect feedback strategies have tended to make a further distinction between those that do or do not use a code (Ellis, 2009). Coded feedback points to the exact location of an error, and the type of error involved is indicated with a code (for examples, VA means an error in the use of verb agreement, PS is an error in the form of the past simple tense, etc.). Uncoded feedback refers to instances when the teacher underlines an error, circles an error, or places an error tally in the margin, but, in each case, leaves the student to diagnose and correct the error.

The effects of feedback (directly or indirectly) have also been conflicting. It was reported that students who received direct feedback did not reduce their errors over time but those who received indirect feedback reduced their errors over time (Lalande, 1982). Kepner (1991) & Sheppard (1992) found significant differences between some different treatment groups focusing on content comments only, error correction only, a combination of content comments and error correction, and error identification without correction. The evidence from studies that have examined different kind of treatments suggests that errors should be treated with caution. On the other hand, in their study on four groups of

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students, three received indirect feedback and one group received direct feedback, Robb et al. (1986) found that there was not any significant difference in long-term gains that improve their accuracy. However, Ferris (2006) claims that indirect feedback is more helpful because students are engaged in reflective learning process that has intuitive appeal.

Metalinguistic feedback. Metalinguistic feedback involves providing learners with some form of explicit comment about the nature of the errors they have made. The comment can use of error codes such as underline, circle, code, other mark or different kinds of abbreviated labels that can be placed over the location of the error in the text or in them margin (Ellis, 2009). Ferris & Roberts (2001) investigated the effects of two different feedback treatments (errors marked with code and errors underlined) and found that both error feedback groups significantly outperformed the no feedback control group. Their findings is similar to Robb et al. (1986) who found that there were no significant differences between the group given coded feedback and the group not given coded feedback. However, corrective feedback is more helpful because students are engaged in reflective learning process (Ferris 2006).

In this study, corrective feedback is any indication provided by the supervisors that the concepts and/or writing mechanism in the students' drafts of theses are incorrect.

#### **2.2.6.4. Valence**

Valence, which is used in psychology to discuss emotions, means the intrinsic attractiveness (positive valence) or aversiveness (negative valence) of an event, object, or situation (Frijda, 1986, p. 267). Brookhart (2008) divides valence feedback into three modes: positive comment, negative comment/criticism, and suggestions for improvement. Based on their observation, Tunstall and Gipps (1996) distinguish feedback into two kinds: evaluative and descriptive. Evaluative

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feedback can be positive such as rewards and praise, or negative such as punishment and criticism, and descriptive such as positive intention and constructive criticism. Hyland and Hyland (2001) point out three broad types of written feedback: praise, criticism, and suggestion.

In this research, effective valence feedback is the feedback that discusses emotions which include positive comment, negative comment/criticism, and suggestions for improvement.

#### **2.2.6.4.1. Positive feedback**

Brookhart (2008, pp. 25-25) suggests that “being positive means describing how the strengths in a students’ work match the criteria for good work and how the strengths show that the student is learning”. Positive feedback refers to judgements implying satisfaction with the learner’s performance (Askew, 2000). Praising as positive feedback encourages the reoccurrence of appropriate language behaviours where writers are accredited for some characteristics, attributes or skills (Holmes, 1988). However, praise needs to be credible and informative as false praising is likely to discourage good writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Moreover, premature praise may confuse writers and discourage their self revisions.

Positive evaluative feedback which was considered ‘positive reinforcement’ includes rewards, general praise, and the like (Brookhart, 2008). This kind of feedback certainly increases learner’s motivation. Deci (1971) in her study on beneficial effects of positive feedback of a control group and an experimental group comprising of undergraduate students, the experimental group received verbal praise whilst the control group did not. The group who received positive feedback showed increased intrinsic motivation in comparison to the no feedback group.

Barrow (2008) suggests that positive feedback ‘works by helping to remove/reduce the amount of uncertainty associated with student actions’. Barrow (2008, p. 73) further added that if positive feedback is given precisely when a student is showing signs of uncertainty, and then we hypothesize that it will reduce that uncertainty and increase learning rate and potentially performance. Barrow (2008) in his study assessing positive feedback found that positive feedback does improve the effectiveness of learning in Intelligent Tutoring Systems, decreasing the amount of time required to see the benefits of using such systems and as such, positive feedback results in increased amount of learning over a shorter period of time. This feedback instantly builds students’ confidence and substantially increases their interest and effort to become better writer (Karim and Ivy, 2011).

Positive feedback is often related to self-esteems. Heatherton & Polivy, (1991) conducted an experiment using either a positive feedback condition or a neutral feedback condition. They found that individual’s self-esteem alters after bogus feedback. However, the feedback method in manipulating self-esteem and favoured a non-obtrusive way with subliminally presented words was criticised by Rikketa & Dauenheimer (2003). Robins and Beer (2001) conducted research to assess student’s positive beliefs about their academic ability as they first entered. They found that reduced levels of self-esteem and well-being were found to be linked to positive beliefs. This research shows the importance of self-appraisal within individuals on aspects of ability.

#### **2.2.6.4.2. Negative feedback**

Negative feedback or criticism which was considered “punishment” includes punishments, general criticisms, and so on (Brookhart, 2008). Criticism is a negative comment used by supervisors or reviewers in expressing their dissatisfaction with the text. The impact of negative feedback demotivates

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students (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Similarly, Karim & Ivy (2011) suggests that negative feedback which is not conveyed properly or if the criticism is not constructive, it may make students lose their interest in writing. This interest is partially attributable to the fact that failure negative feedback has the potential to elicit a wide variety of motivational responses (Brockner et al., 1987). However, negative feedback may decrease, increase, or have no effect on individuals' strivings, depending upon certain situational and dispositional factors.

Hyland & Hyland (2001) in their previous studies on teacher feedback have suggested that most comments tend to focus on negative aspects of writing. Dragga (1985) also found that 94% of written teacher comments were negative in nature. However, teacher feedback and peer feedback are different and it is still debatable whether peer feedback would incur similar high tendency of negative comment usage as teacher feedback.

North (2013) on her review on negative and positive feedback shows that novices wanted and responded best to positive feedback, and experts sought out and responded to negative feedback. This is a finding consistent with sport psychology research on athletes. Brockner et al. (1987) in their study on self-esteem and reactions to negative feedback found that low self-esteems are more apt than high self-esteems to become demotivated in the face of negative feedback. The results of study are consistent with the same general point: that low self-esteems are more demotivated by negative feedback than are high self-esteems. However, avoiding negative feedback is both wrong-headed and dangerous. When wrong-headed negative *feedback* is delivered in the right way and at the right time, criticism is in fact highly motivating. Dangerous because without awareness of the mistakes he or she is making, no one can possibly improve. Staying "positive" when doling out feedback will only get you so far (Halvorson 2013)

#### **2.2.6.4.3. Suggestions**

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Suggestion for improvement is the other mode of feedback. Suggestion which has a positive orientation differs from criticism in containing commentary for improvement. Productive suggestion known as constructive criticism includes clear and achievable actions for writers. In this feedback, students remember and value encouraging remarks but also welcome constructive criticisms rather than false positive appraisals (Ferris, 1995a).

Suggestions from feedback can be incorporated into revisions and the writing can be made better (Brookhart, 2008). It means that students have opportunities to improve their work from the suggestions. However, supervisors may feel that some of suggestions for improvement carry implied criticisms and they choose to take the stings from these by toning down the force of our suggestions (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Van den Boom et al. (2007) in their study on the effects of students' reflections, combined with suggestive feedback, on the development of self-regulated learning and learning outcomes. The results showed that reflection combined with feedback positively affected students' self-regulated learning. In addition, students in the condition with tutor feedback outperformed students in both other conditions on learning outcomes.

In this research, effective valence feedback is the feedback that discusses emotions which include positive comment, negative comment/criticism, and suggestions for improvement.

#### **2.2.6.5. Clarity**

It is important to consider the clarity of feedback, especially how to indicate the ways in which students can improve and develop for the future writing. For this reason, students need to understand the feedback information as intended. The criterion for clarity is whether the writing would be clear to the individual student (Brookhart, 2008). However, providing clear feedback is actually an extremely

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demanding writing task: students often find it difficult to understand what their instructors' comments mean, even when those comments seem quite straightforward to the instructors themselves (Hodges, 1997).

In her research of English as Second Language (ESL) teachers' comments on their students' papers, Zamel (1985, p. 79) finds out that "they frequently 'misread' students' texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content specific comments or offer strategies for revising the text." It is expected that teachers know that writing is a process which involves different steps such as planning, editing, drafting and revising. The writing process allows for interplay between writing and thinking, and that the stages are not fixed, so the piece of writing is not a final one, and therein it should be taken as a draft (Ruegg, 2010)

Clarity is not simply a case of pointing out errors or faults and expecting students to sort out what is required, but an indication of the steps students can take in order to 'close the gap' on their understanding or by focusing on key areas for development and improvement (Irons, 2007). Clarity refers to the clear message using simple vocabulary and sentence structure, writing or speaking on the student's developmental level, and checking that the student understands the feedback (Brookhart, 2008, p. 32). In other words, it is not ambiguous. Certain words such as *describe*, *discuss* and *evaluate* are ambiguous (Coffin et al., 2003, p. 115) as those words may suggest further discussion.

Brookhart (2008) suggests that good feedback clarity is: a) Using simple vocabulary; b) Writing or speaking on the student's work; and c) Checking that the student understands the feedback. While bad feedback clarity is a) Using big words and complicated sentence structure; b) Writing to show what you know, not developmental level; c. Assuming the student understands the feedback. It includes identifying the location of problems, providing comments in the margins,

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global comments at the end of a paper, and even oral comments given to the student (Biber et al., 2011).

Feedback written in the margins of a paper should provide more general information of what the strong points and what the weak points of the paper are. However, it can be difficult for students to understand the connections between overview comments and marginal comments unless the supervisor spells those connections out explicitly (Hodges, 1997). In addition, the traditional way of correcting students' compositions is indicated through the papers with a red pen, circling, drawing arrows and scribbling comments (Ruegg, 2010). It is understood as many students make the same errors again and again although they receive feedback from their supervisors.

In this paper, effective clarity is when the message is clearly understood by using simple vocabulary and sentence structure, the problems are shown clearly and the solutions to the problems are given. (Irons, 2007; Brookhart, 2008:, p. 32).

#### **2.2.6.6. Specificity**

Feedback specificity is defined as the level of information provided in feedback messages (Goodman et al., 2004). It "varies along a continuum that begins with outcome feedback only (whether an action was right or wrong) to highly specific (explicitly identifying problems, their location and providing solutions)" (Nelson & Schunn, 2009). In other words, feedback does not only provide information about students' accuracy but also tends to be more directive than facilitative (Shute, 2007). This means that specific feedback have specific principles, not too narrow or not too broad, but just right (Brookhart, 2008).

These principles are not simple because when teachers read students' paper with a pen or pencil in hand, they tend to correct all the mechanical errors of the essay (Brookhart, 2008). Specificity also refers to where working with

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students in terms of indicating when feedback will be given, discussing the type of feedback and focusing on specific points in feedback or working on a strategy of self- or peer-assessment (Irons, 2007). Specific feedback or comments not vague comments point to exact parts of the paper that were problematic; give examples of general problems that you found; are clear about what exactly the problem was; explain why it was a problem and make our comments helpful (Nelson & Schunn, 2009). However, specific feedback is to give guidance but not to do the work for the students, as well as offer suggestions that are specific enough so the student knows what the next step to take (Brookhart, 2008).

There have been a number of studies reporting that feedback is significantly more effective when it provides details of how to improve the answer, rather than when it just indicates whether the student's work is correct or not (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991; Pridemore & Klein, 1995). Less specific feedback may be useless for students or even frustrate them (Williams, 1997). It may also make students unsure how to respond to the feedback (Fedor, 1991) and may require greater information processing activity on the part of the learner to understand the intended message (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991).

In their research on feedback specificity and its relationship to learning, Phye and Sanders (1994) tested two types of feedback (general advice versus specific feedback, the latter providing the learner with the correct answer). Students were assigned to one of the two learning conditions, and they received either general advice or specific feedback as part of a verbal analogy problem-solving task. The result of the research showed that the more specific feedback was clearly superior to general advice on a retention task.

In this study, effective feedback specificity is when the feedback points to exact problems and the location. The other less specific feedback is general feedback with helpful comments.

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### **2.2.6.7. Tone**

Tone is defined as “a web of feelings stretched throughout an essay, feelings from which our sense of the persona emerges” (Kane, 1998). In this paper, tone is meant how student feels with the feedback provided by the supervisor in terms of the words, expressions, symbols, colours written or put on the paper/work. It refers to the expressive quality of the feedback message, affects how the message will be heard and responded. The tone of a message is conveyed by word choice and style which are much more than just linguistic levels as to communicate underlying assumptions about students (Brookhart, 2008). Students like to feel that their supervisors are interested in what they convey and how they convey it. Showing that we understand and appreciate what the student attempted to accomplish whether or not the student actually achieved his or her goals can go a long way toward helping the student accept our feedback rather than responding defensively (Gottschalk and Hjortshoj, 2004; Harvard Writing Project Bulletin, 2000).

The purpose of feedback tone is to communicate respect for the student as a learner, to position the student as an active, not passive agent, and to inspire thought, curiosity, or wondering (Brookhart 2008). However, tone does not only inspire but also discourage students. For that reason, it is always necessary to be positive in the sense of lighting the way forward that suggests *a* way forward and that the students are capable of taking it (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). This image of lighting the way forward is used to characterize descriptive feedback that makes suggestions for improvement. It may mean that students and teacher are in the darkness and the teacher has a flashlight. The teacher flashes the light around until students see their mistakes or things are inappropriate and makes suggestions to improve them.

In showing students mistakes, it is important to use appropriate words as “... none of us have ‘our own words’ to put our thought into and that even our

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most innovative knowledge is heavily mediated by cultural tools not of our making” (Prior, 1998). In other words, word choice should be respectful of students as persons and position them as active agents of their own learning (Johnston, 2004). The words chosen (written or oral) will affect the students’ identities. Since word choice reflects tone, the supervisors need to be mindful of the power of their chosen words and also need to be aware of how their words communicate compassion and how the tone of the communication is perceived by the student (Rubel & Wallace, 2010). A compassionate and encouraging learning environment is needed by students. These personal issues are important as to support students to complete their thesis or their course on time. That is why supervisors need to find ways to improve their communication and to do this they need to be aware of the connection of words to tone (Rubel & Wallace, 2010). It is important for supervisors to determine the best tone for the students and the nature of the teacher-student interpersonal relationship (Biber et al., 2011).

However, research provides evidence that teachers often talk with good students as if they were active, self-regulated learners but often do not care with poor students (Brookhart, 2008).

Further Brookhart (2008, p. 34) gives examples of good and bad word choice tone. Good word choice of tone includes using words and phrases that assume the student is an active learner, asking questions and sharing with students what we are wondering about. Bad word choice includes using words and phrases that “lecture” or “boss”, telling the student what to do—leaving nothing up to the student’s choice and assuming that our feedback is the last word, the final expert opinion.

In this study, effective tone is when the supervisors are able to express quality of the feedback and students can hear and respond to the message appropriately. The message provided by the supervisors is inspiring, praising or critiquing.

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### **2.2.7. Sources of feedback**

The sources of writing feedback discussed in this study are supervisors and tutors and peers.

#### **2.2.7.1. Supervisor's Feedback**

Supervisor's feedback helps students to know the strengths and weaknesses in their writing. It encourages the students to improve their writing and makes them confident. It is the responsibility of supervisors to read student's thesis and give sufficient feedback on it within the allocated length of time (Murray, 2002, p. 70). Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006) state that feedback should be motivational for learners and the process of providing feedback should enable supervisors to develop their supervision further. Feedback expected by learners is a more systematic strategy which leads to more motivation during learning that finally results in a better learning outcome, Vollmeyer & Rheiberg (2005). However, many learners find that the feedback they receive unsatisfactory. There is almost problem with the feedback students receive from their supervisors. For example, "If students sense that a course is badly implemented, that they are overloaded with work, that there are no clear goals and poor feedback then they are more likely to respond with surface then deep approaches, irrespective of the pedagogy or the technology being deployed by the teacher" (Ellis et al., 2008).

Supervisors need to provide sufficient feedback on student's work to improve their thesis quality, to encourage a deep approach to learning (Biggs, 2003), and to engage with the feedback they receive (Mills and Matthews, 2009). As we know that each student has their own attitude and preference on feedback for examples, some of them like the comments only and some others like good grades only. It may mean that giving comments only can be a very effective way of providing feedback but Black et al. (2003) suggest that providing ungraded

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comments may not be enough to encourage students to take notice. Black et al. (2003) argue that the most important thing is that comments should tell students what they did well and what they needed to do to improve their work. Brown & Glover (2006) suggest similar idea that written feedback should be encouraging, showing students where they went wrong and how they could improve. Further Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006) state that providing the motivational element is an important part of feedback practice.

Providing appropriate, inspirational and encouraging feedback is not simple. Some supervisors may give better feedback than other supervisors or students. Cho et al. (2006) find that instructors thought that another instructor's feedback was more helpful than students' feedback. However, there also has been evidence that instructors may not be able to accurately judge what students will find intuitive or difficult (Nathan & Koedinger, 2000). In fact, one study found that students did not rate supervisor's feedback as more helpful than students' feedback (Cho et al., 2006). To make it worse, "teachers consistently thought that they provide more and better feedback than their students felt when they received" (Prystowsky & DaRosa, 2003). For those reasons, Wisker et al. (2008) suggest the following expectations on supervisors: (a) giving the critique in a constructive way, (b) providing good knowledge of the research area; either personally, or by referring to an expert to access this knowledge, (c) making sure to ask open questions, (d) putting the students in touch with information, and (e) supporting the students to enter the academic community such as attending appropriate conferences and introducing them to other researchers in their field. The expectations above do not mean that the supervisors would do the students' work but would assist them to produce high quality thesis.

#### **2.2.7.2. Tutor's feedback**

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Tutorial feedback is a type of learning that involves discussion with a tutor either for individual or group. Learning through discussions is an important strategy for students (Ellis & Calvo, 2004; Hung et al., 2005). One-on-one human tutoring has been shown to be the most effective type of learning intervention (Bloom, 1984). The discussions about tutorial feedback have led to consensus that experienced tutor maintain a balance that allows students to do as much as of the work as possible while providing them with enough guidance to keep them from becoming frustrated or confused (Fox, 1993; Lepper & Chabay, 1988). Enough explicit guidance would be very helpful for students to repair their writing problems. Tutors in this case are expected to avoid indicating precisely where their errors are but try to lead students to discover their errors and to repair them by themselves as this type of indirect guidance allows students to maintain a feeling of control, and there is evidence that it has strong motivational benefits (Moore et al., 2004). This tutorial feedback can take place both in computer-based online (synchronous or asynchronous) discussions and face-to-face tutorial discussions.

Face to face feedback approach draws on a socio-constructivist approach to learning, in which understandings are developed through a dialogically based interaction between teachers and learners (Laurillard, 2002). Within this approach assessment feedback is seen as an important learning tool, providing opportunities for teachers and students to interact and for students to develop both their conceptual understanding, and their understanding of assessment standards and quality (Wegerif, 2008).

There have been a large number of research studies attempting to address the differences between in-class face-to-face discussions and off-class online discussions. Some differences between online discussions and face-to-face discussions have been identified as follows (Tiene, 2000):

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- a. Online discussions are likely to have more access problems than face-to-face discussions because it involves more technical components such as computers, discussion forums and internet connections.
- b. Online discussions normally need a longer time frame to process because participants need more time to read and reflect, prepare responses and type in the responses in written texts. In asynchronous online discussion, when participants enter into the discussions at different times, it may take longer duration needed for the discussions (Meyer, 2003).
- c. Responses in online discussions are articulated in written rather than in spoken form. It may not favour those who are more inclined to oral expression. In addition, text alone is not always able to represent ‘the human voice that can convey the tone of the conversation’ (Tiene, 2000, p. 373).
- d. Visual cues are mostly lost in online discussions. A number of emotions can be expressed in written language but they are not equivalent to human gestures and expressions to convey meaning. However, online discussions are not totally inferior to the face-to-face discussions as studies have found that different tasks may prefer different types of discussion. For instance, a task that needs much coordination may not be suitable for a text-based online discussion where visual cues are primarily absent (Wang & Woo, 2007). In addition, problem-solving tasks may be more appropriate for a textual online discussion (Moallem, 2003).

In general the advantage of online discussions refers to the convenience and flexibility it offers in terms of time and place (Hara et al., 2000). This is because students are able to take part in online discussions at almost anytime and anywhere. Some studies support that online discussions as associated with distance education helps participants who may not have the opportunity to meet or interact with their learning counterparts (King, 2001). On-line discussions have also become more involved in ‘traditional’ classroom settings to promote student critical thinking, knowledge construction and learning autonomy (Lim & Chai,

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2004; Marra et al., 2004). In another study, Meyer (2003) compared the experiences of students in face-to-face discussions with threaded discussions, which revealed that students involved in online discussions exhibited more higher-order thinking by contributing more exploratory and integrative comments. In a study analysing online messages in computer conferences by using the content analysis approach, Newman et al., (1996) argued that online students were more likely to make important statements and link ideas together although the fewer number of novel ideas produced. In another online discussion study, Marra et al., (2004) pointed out evidence of student critical thinking in generating new ideas, clarifying information and linking ideas.

On the other hand, research shows the medium of online discussion is not always a favourable choice among students. In a survey comparing online and face-to-face discussions, Tiene (2000) and Cooper (2001) found that most students still preferred face-to-face discussions to online discussions even though they believed that online discussions could offer more convenience and flexibility. Further Cooper (2001) indicated that in face-to-face communication the teacher can adapt the questions as necessary, can pick up nonverbal cues from the student, clarify doubt and ensure that the responses are properly understood by repeating or rephrasing the questions. Face-to-face discussion has a number of significant benefits, and many observers argue that there is no replacement for face-to-face contact, regardless of how far technology has evolved (Duke, 2001). Face-to-face communication supports the transfer of tacit knowledge (Bower & Kawaguchi, 2001), the knowledge which is unformulated (not written or definable) but is gained through, the basis for making sense of experience (Polanyi, 2002; Griffith et al., 2003).

In face-to-face communication, the speaker can draw on non-verbal language (gestures, facial expressions) from the interlocutors to gain immediate feedback and make quick adjustments as needed (Storper & Venables, 2004).

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Non-verbal language and other social interactions in face-to-face dialogue also enable participants to learn more easily about one another's background, skills, experiences, and areas of expertise (Rosen et al., 2007). These social interactions build trust and confidence within participants that interact face-to-face (Storper & Venables, 2004). However, in face-to-face interaction, research suggests that teachers need to be more careful in giving criticism to students. Uncontrolled criticism can bring possible threats to the public image of students, weakening their confidence in what they believe and damaging the relationship of trusts with the teacher (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In face-to-face group interactions, minority expression is lower inhibiting trust in heterogeneous groups and creating unequal participation among members (McLeod et al., 1997; Lind, 1999; Krebs et al., 2006).

Interaction has been a critical component of the educational process and context and has always been valued in distance education even in its most traditional, independent study format (Holmberg, 1989). However, the effectiveness of the interactive learning experience is influenced by a number of diverse and complex factors. In study using a survey instrument to examine perceptions of the relationship between interactivity and learning in the context of online and flexible learning environments, Sims (2003, pp. 101) argues that "learners taking on a more participatory role" and "creating opportunities that are more adaptable to the characteristics and preferences of the individual users" are essential determinants of the success of interactive, computer-enhanced learning environments.

Further, Anderson (2003) states that equal interaction adds a useful perspective on the issue of interaction in online learning. There are no single medium supports the educational experience that is superior to other media. A deep and meaningful formal learning happens if interaction between student and teacher, student and student, and student with content) is at a high level. It is also

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noted that synchronous technologies, such as audio and video conferencing, provide slightly less interaction between students and teachers and students and students due to the inherent technological distance between them mediate by technology.

Some research has indicated that the level of active participation, the quality of discussion and group dynamics improve better when synchronous collaborative systems are brought into teaching (Marjanovic, 1999). The design for synchronous online peer discussion including contextual issues, led to improved argumentation and collaborative knowledge development among their UK Open University students (McAlister et al., 2004). In synchronous online interaction, social relationships and shared understanding are considered to be important.

In short those all aspects of effective supervision are important to be considered by supervisors. They are important for students to produce a high-quality thesis, completion in time, dissemination to the subject community, and also preparing the candidate for a related future career (Taylor & Beasley, 2005).

### **2.2.7.3. Peer's feedback**

The role of peer feedback, which gives students constructive information about their writing, has become an important issue in academic writing response. Hyland & Hyland (2006, p. 6) suggest that "... peer review can be seen as formative developmental process that writers have the opportunities to discuss their texts and discover other's interpretation of them." However, some students do not trust the ability of their peers especially those whose English level more or less the same as theirs. Leki (1990) suggests that students may find it hard to judge the validity of their peer's comment. Some other writers may react negatively to critical comment from their peers because peers are not the best providers of criterion-based feedback, as they often do not have the needed grasp of

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conventions (Peterson, 2010). However, once the peer the response process is underway, the writer's perception is likely to change and he finds that commenting on essays is helping him to be more critical on his own writing. Rollinson (1998) found that high levels of valid feedback among college level students as peer writers can and do revise effectively on the basis of peer comments.

When students have difficulty to judge the validity of their peer's' comment, they also have difficulty to indentify problem's areas in their peers' writing and it may lead them to give wrong advice (Horowitz, 1986). The difficulty to judge peer's comment and negative reactions indicate that peers do not contribute significant effect. Peer feedback only contributed marginal difference to student writing (Connor and Asenavage, 1994). However, peer feedback with its high potentiality of response and interaction between reader and writer can encourage collaborative dialogue in which two-ways communication is established and meaning is negotiated between the two parties. It also 'fosters a myriad communicative behaviours' and highly complex sociocognitive interactions involving arguing, explaining, clarifying and justifying (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996, p. 69).

The kind of feedback which learners perceive to be helpful in making improvement for their thesis writing is the feedback that enhances "the learning experience and support efforts to improve a student's level of academic achievement" (Mills & Matthews, 2009). Research shows that peers make helpful contributions to students' writing development. They provide reader-based feedback that shows student writers the effect that the writing is having on a peer audience (Black et al., 2003). Peer feedback also helps to develop student writers' sense of audience – their recognition of the perspectives, language, sentence structure, voice and other elements of writing that provoke, entertain or satisfy their audience (Peterson & McClay, 2010).

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To give or to gain spontaneous feedback from peers, instructional strategy needs to be designed and taught. For example, in writing class, formal opportunities for peer feedback can be scheduled by teachers. In this activity, students are assigned to exchange their writing with peers to read in a small group setting. After reading, they follow the idea of Reid (1993) to give comment what is the best and weakest parts of the paper and how the weakest parts would be improved. Many teachers use a “two stars and a wish” framework, asking peers to identify two elements of students’ writing that they thought were strong and one element that could be improved (Peterson & McClay, 2010). Peer feedback is more informal, more time providing than teacher’s feedback and happens in two way-communications while teacher’s feedback is more authoritative. Writer retains the right to reject comment and is thus more able to maintain the possession of his own text. Teacher’s feedback is not effective because in facts there may be many deficiencies in the written comments of teachers. They have been criticized as being unspecific, inconsistent, inaccurate, meaningless, and vague (Zamel, 1985).

Problematic aspects of peer feedback cover time constrain and student’s characteristics. Students need more time to read, write note and give comments. Carson and Nelson (1996) state that Chinese students tended to withhold critical comment, either to maintain group harmony or because they were reluctant to claim a degree of authority. The problem above can be alleviated through setting up the group and establishing procedure and adequate training. Without training student response is inappropriate: their feedback remains destructive, surface matter, and ”it is not fair to expect that students will be able to perform these demanding tasks without first having been offered organise practiced with and discussion of the skills involved” (Stanley, 1992, p. 230). The other problem such as lengthy explanations for errors provided by peers hurt performance between writing drafts (Tseng & Tsai, 2006). Tseng and Tsai’s finding was particularly

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surprising because providing explanations is intuitively helpful. This study may account for the surprising result because those who provide the explanations may not be skilful in providing helpful explanations.

To make good use of peer feedback students should be systematically trained how to do it. Teacher is suggested to model good examples of giving feedback using one of the student's papers with his/her permission but preferred to be still anonymous. The feedback can be delivered in the form of a recorded commentary but not crowded with the teacher's notes on the margins to motivate students to revise their writing as they see the effort the teacher to make them understand better (Hyland, 1990). In the study of a prerequisite training for successful use of peer feedback of experimental group students, the students were found to be very enthusiastic about giving and receiving feedback with their peers and the discussions revealed their understanding of the procedure (Berg, 1999).

Culture has become an important issue in peer feedback (collective learning). School culture appeared to be the dominant influence on collective learning, more so than vision and mission, structure, strategies, and policy and resources (Leithwood et al., 1998). Life within a given culture will flow smoothly if one's behaviour conforms to unwritten codes of the culture. Rait (1995, p. 65) suggests:

An organization's culture embodies an informal structure and normative system that influence information flow and other organizational processes. Culture may implicitly or explicitly delineate the boundaries of what is considered proper and improper action.

Normative system's break down happens when individuals in the system do not conform to the culture. Norms shape reactions to internally or externally proposed or imposed improvements to organisational learning. Giving attention to learning-oriented norms is essential because the acceptance of changes by a

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school depends on the fit between the norms embedded in the changes and those within the school's own culture (Sarason, 1996). Learning collaboration will be achieved when norms of collectiveness is valued by the members of the organisation. However, individualism and self-reliance may exit the organisation.

Collaboration is likely to lead to improvement and organisational learning. Collaboration happens through team teaching, mentoring, action research, peer coaching, planning and mutual observation and feedback. These activities create greater interdependence, collective commitment, shared responsibility, and, perhaps most important, 'greater readiness to participate in the difficult business of review and critiques' (Fullan & Hargreaves 1992).

Students from different cultures may have different expectations about basic aspects of group situation such as the roles of the group members, the mechanics of the group, and interpersonal interaction strategies (Carsen & Nelson, 1996 and Nelson & Carsen, 1998). Hyland & Hyland (2006) suggest that the differences make it hard for multicultural groups to reach a consensus about what to focus on and how to convey information and may affect the extent to which students incorporate their peers' suggestions. If the group members cooperate, the writers may make changes, but if the interaction is bad or the writers become defensive, they are difficult to make changes (Nelson & Murphy, 1993). This means that changes depend on the interaction. It is known that all learning situations are unique and interaction during the peer revision can be diverse and unpredictable. The diversity of student populations, their distinct cultural dispositions and instructional socialization, as well as their own beliefs about writing, may lead to different results (Grabe, 2001). However, cultural disposition in peer work of a certain group/place may be different from the others. In Japanese and Chinese culture, for example, students do not like to give comment or feedback to other students because their comments may not be useful but may hurt the writer's feeling or damage the harmony of the group (Carson & Nelson,

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1994). In Chinese culture, when students ask questions they may lose face as others think that they are stupid. On the other hand when they ask smart questions, they are considered to be showing off (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998).

In this paper, effective sources of feedback are the supervisors, tutors and peers who provide feedback for the students writing their theses in the writing supervision.

### **2.2.8. Key Issues of Writing Feedback**

Feedback has become a hot debate among many researchers and writing instructors. The debate focuses more on the impact, contribution, and effectiveness of the feedback. Some researchers suggest that written feedback seems to be positive but the contribution to students writing is not clear (Saito, 1994 and Zhang, 1995). Feedback on error was both discouraging and unhelpful (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, error correction had few positive effects on students' writing and this very little benefit of feedback is the responsibility of teachers to change student attitude (Truscott, 1996; Polio et al., 1998).

Within the context of assessment, feedback is meant as the 'information provided by an agent... regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding' and can be seen in a transformational sense as being a 'change-agent' in an individual's learning, learning style, achievement or understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81) Assessment and feedback remain an area of practice delivered with varying degrees of success and resulting in varying levels of satisfaction amongst the student population (O'Brien & Sparshatt, 2007; Sturridge, 2007). The feedback is provided on student writing to support students' writing development and nurture their confidence as writers and often takes the form of written comments on their final graded compositions (Smith, 1997). However, these comments rarely have as great an impact on students' writing development as teachers intend (Peterson, 2003).

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Feedback on students' writing is a form of social action designed to accomplish educational and social goals that occur in particular cultural, institutional and interpersonal contexts between students and teachers/instructors (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 10). This action happens in communication to negotiate particular social identities and relationship mediated by various types of delivery. As teachers spend a great deal of time providing written feedback to students, it is important that the feedback has a greater influence on students' writing development. To have a greater influence, teachers need to appreciate the motivating effect of feedback on students particularly positive feedback, and to take great care in ensuring that positive statements are actually helpful. Positive comments encourage and motivate students to engage in further study, or as a reward for the effort they have done (Irons, 2008). Schunk (1989) suggests that positive feedback will enhance student confidence in their academic abilities and as such improve academic performance as students develop confidence in their academic abilities. Positive feedback is considered "positive reinforcement," and negative feedback is considered "punishment" (Schunk, 1989). Both reinforcement and punishment that affect learning and feedback theoretically should be effective. The problem with the theory is that not all feedback actually is effective (Brookhart, 2008).

There has been a lot evidence in many studies that feedback is not effective, for examples: (a) Some students have difficulty to judge the validity of their feedback and to indentify problem's areas in their writing and it lead them to give wrong advise (Horowitz, 1986); (b) Students do not really make use of the feedback but are only interested in grades or marks (Hounsell, 1987); (c) Feedback from teachers does not actually contribute to students learning, especially when it is not constructive, not understood by students and too complex or is contradictory (Lea & Street, 1998); (d) Students find it hard to judge the validity of their peer's comment (Leki; 1990); (e) Feedback given to

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students is only to justify the mark or score of their work (MacLellan, 2001); (f) Feedback might actually be inappropriate, for example: positive feedback that makes students feel better or that encourage them irrespective of the quality of the work being assessed (Pelligrino *et al.*, 2001); (g) Feedback may be categorical in tone and not particularly explicit (Mutch, 2003); (h) Feedback provision may not be fair as it has the potential to include bias. One of the main concerns from students is that they want feedback to be fair (Holmes & Smith, 2003); (i) There is not any opportunity for students to enter into dialogue or discourse about their feedback, especially when it emphasises the power relationship between teachers and students and the teacher is providing all the feedback without opportunity for dialogue between teacher and students and feedback may actually foster rote learning – especially as a reaction to frequent feedback (Iron, 2008).

On the other hand, there is also evidence in research studies that feedback gives significant contribution or is effective, for examples: (a) Feedback has a powerful potential with the possibility for a revision of cognition itself that stems from responses (Freedman, 1985); (b) Studies on feedback of undergraduate essays, library research papers and undergraduate dissertations show that feedback on writing from literacy teachers is generally valued by students (Hyland, 1998); (c) Writing feedback appears to lead to improvements in writing (Ferris, 2003a); (d) Effective comments on students' work constitute one of the characteristics of quality teaching (Ramsden, 2003); (e) The centrality of feedback for student-writers is well established in the literature (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Hyatt, 2005); (f) Feedback 'lies at the heart of the learning experience ... it is through written feedback that the supervisor communicates and provides advanced academic training, particularly in writing, to the supervisee' (Kumar & Stracke, 2007, p. 462).

However, feedback still remains practice delivered with varying degrees of success and resulting in varying levels of satisfaction amongst the student

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population (O'Brien & Sparshatt, 2007; Sturridge, 2007). From the problematic of feedback discussed above Castle et al (2008, p. 90) ask: "What kind of feedback (given at what time) do students perceive to be most helpful in facilitating progression in their learning?"

### **2.3. Thesis Assessment Criteria**

In the process of writing up a thesis, supervisees need to receive input and guidance about their research progress and thesis writing from supervisors. (Wang and Li, 2009). A key to successful thesis completion is contributed by supervisors' constructive and detailed feedback (Engebretson et al. 2008; and Bitchener, Bastrukmen and East, 2011). The contribution of feedback to thesis development is indicated by the final draft of the thesis which is assessed by evaluators based on the expected standard criteria.

#### **2.3.1. Well-written Thesis**

A thesis is defined as a systematic scientific document based on scientific methods and is defended in front of thesis examiners (Biantoro, 2009); "a report or research intended mainly for scholarly audience" (Glatthorn & Joyners, 2005:6); or 'a dissertation on particular subject in which one has done original research, as one presented for a diploma or degree especially a master degree" Davinson (1977, p. 11). Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Thesis assessment is a process aimed at understanding and improving student thesis. It involves making expectations explicit setting appropriate criteria and high standards for thesis quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well the thesis matches those expectations and standards.

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Well-written thesis must meet the criteria of the faculty or institution. The common criteria of a good thesis formulated by institutions or by scholars are clearly structured from the beginning, middle and an end parts on the thesis. Oliver (2004, p. 11) suggests the following criteria of well-written thesis.

It should be written in a clear style which, while doing justice to the academic requirements of the subjects, does not use unnecessary jargons. It often helps if the thesis is subdivided into chapter and sections so that the reader can readily follow the developing argument. There should be an easily followed thread of argument running through the thesis, so that readers never reach a point where they are unsure how one section has led to another.

The criteria above cover the whole parts of a thesis such as all chapters and their sections or sub-divisions including style, organization and coherence. It is stated that “all the four criteria like content, organization, vocabulary and language are important in the writing performance” (Nik et al, 2010, p. 12). Those criteria have not fulfilled the basic contents of a thesis which include: “title page, acknowledgement, table of contents, abstract, introduction, review of related literature, methodology, results and discussion, summary and conclusion, bibliography, and appendices” (Prime Thesis, 2009).

### **2.3.2. Topic/Title**

Topic is a subject of writing or discussion and title is the name or label of the discussion (Leo et al., 2007). A thesis title should be interesting, researchable, significant, manageable and ethical (Gay et al, 2006). A short descriptive title is best, one which tells the reader about the content of the thesis (Holtom & Fisher, 1999, p. 12).

Characteristics of a good research topic include: a) It is an issue that needs investigation; b) It can be investigated through collecting and analysing data; c) It

is a significant study that contributes in some way to the improvement or understanding of theory and practice (Gay et al., 2007)

### **2.3.3. Contents and Organisation**

The contents of an effective research paper according to (Sorenson, 2010, pp. 292-293): (a) indicates careful, comprehensive reading and understanding of the topic, (b) establishes, in its introduction, a thesis to be developed during the course of the paper, (c) follows a clear organization, (e) employs the principles of good composition, (f) includes direct quotations, paraphrases, or précis that support the thesis, (g) includes parenthetical notes, endnotes, or footnotes, h. includes a list of works cited, (i) exhibits careful, thorough documentation of sources of all ideas, (j) includes direct quotations in support of its thesis, (k) follows a carefully prescribed format (pp. 292-293). In other words, all the content is relevant to the topic; all the main points have been included in thesis; the question(s) in the thesis have been answered; and the information in the thesis is true, important and logical (Holtom & Fisher, 1999).

Organization is “the ways in which the parts of a paragraph or multi-paragraph paper are put together, with all parts properly connected” (Sorenson, 2010, p. 444). The structure or organization of a thesis may vary according to the thesis writing guideline of an institution. Even in the same institution or university, they may have the different organization of writing. Emilia (2008, pp. 94-95) states that every writer uses different elements especially in the review of literature and the discussion and analysis of data. For examples: A review of literature, which commonly appears in chapter two, it may appear in other the chapters in some other theses.

#### **2.3.3.1. Introduction**

Introduction which appears is the first chapter of a thesis, is very important to give impression to the readers the overall thesis. Plato et al. in Emilia (2008, p. 140) consider that introduction is as “The beginning is half of the whole.” and as a window to the thesis (Clare & Hamilton, 2003). As a window to thesis, introduction is to introduce the topic of the essay, to give a general background of the topic, to indicate the overall plan of the essay, to arouse the reader’s interest in the topic (Oshima & Hogue, 1999, p. 78). Moriati (1997), Clare (2003), Swales & Feak (1994) in Emilia (2008:140) point out that the functions of introduction is are to show context, significance, research questions, and issues being studied in the research, to bring readers to the organization of the thesis, explain how the research questions and issues being studied in the research appear and to explain the scope of the research, to identify the gap or space of the study, to sign how to fill in the available space/gap. Further, Holtom & Fisher (1999, p. 64) state that introduction is to lay out the background of the research and show the relationship between the work and the wider field, to tell the reader why the project is interesting and what questions have been aimed to answer, to present the broad area of research and then narrow down to specific interest, and finally posed the question that the thesis is answering.

The functions of introduction above show that the contents of introduction cover: general background information on the project, the research problem, purpose of the study, hypotheses or research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and organization of the thesis (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). These all contents ideally appear in thesis.

### **2.3.3.2. Literature Review**

The literature review is to show what the writer knows about the previous research and how relevance to the research being conducted. The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a specific topic, issue,

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research method, area or theory (Afolabi, 1992). Pearce (2005) suggests that literature review serves as evidence that the researcher has seriously studied his research by spending lots of his time in the library. Further Thody (2006) states that the overall function (aim and purpose) of literature review is to provide a justification of the proposed research project, indicating how it will be different to that which has been published and to develop an argument or a case for study based on the literature reviewed.

The main functions of literature review which cover the following components: (a) to review what has been (or partly been) researched/written by identifying relevant theories, the research in the field, summarizing and synthesizing the literature or describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration (Afolabi, 1992). Rudestam & Newton, 1992); (b) to critique this literature by identifying argument for and against the theories, assessing the value of the research claim and research design and methodology, and identifying limitations in previous research (University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center, 2009; Lipman, 2003; Cooper, 2010); (c) to identify a gap, a problem, a need in the research literature by determining where the gap in the knowledge and research lie, identifying what areas have been partially researched (Machi, 2009); Todhy, 2006; Murray 2002, p. 106); (d) to provide a rationale for doing the proposed study; and (e) to inform the design and methodology of the proposed study by providing rationale, direction for proposed research, clear focus and guidance for the research questions, guidance for an appropriate design and methodology and background/context for proposed research (Machi, 2009; Brown, 2006).

Referring to the functions of literature above from Machi (2009); Brown (2006); Todhy (2006); Murray (2002); University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center (2009); Lipman (2003); Cooper (2010); Rudestam & Newton (1992), literature reviews comprise the following components: (a) An overview of the

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subject, issue or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review, (b) Division of works under review into categories (e.g. those in support of a particular position, those against, and those offering alternative theses entirely), (c) Explanation of how each work is similar to and how it varies from the others; (d) Conclusions as to which pieces are best considered in their argument, are most convincing of their opinions, and make the greatest contribution to the understanding and development of their area of research.

### **2.3.3.3. Research Methodology**

Research methodology is another important chapter in thesis. It is important for a researcher or writer to understand a suitable research methodology for the proposed research. This chapter is not as hard as the other chapters or is considered to be the most simple section of a thesis (Swales & Feak, 1994; Moriotti, 1997). However, Emilia (2008, p. 187) argues that no parts of a thesis are simple as all parts are integrated and united into one whole. Research methodology includes specific procedures; research population or sample; instrumentation; pilot study; data collection; treatment of data and summary (Mauch & Park, 2003, p. 107)

Research methodology contents according to Braunstein (2007); Oliver, 2004; Clare, 2003 cover the following details: (a) Research design; (b) Methods used to collect data; (c) Research instrument; (d) Methods used to analyze data; (e) Details who, how, when and why participants or respondents are chosen (f) For ethnography, description of setting and participants; and (g) Issues of ethics and consent.

### **2.3.3.4. Findings and Discussion**

Findings (data presentation) and analysis (discussion) are the most important and difficult chapter in thesis (Thomas, 2000) and that need the most time to spend

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altogether (Glathorn & Joyner, 2005) to present the overall observations made and findings obtained. The purpose of the finding chapter is to present the data of the study clearly and meaningfully (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). However, this does not imply that it is a simple transfer of the data from the field into a manuscript. Tables, figures, photos and other forms of illustrations pertaining to the data are appropriately incorporated and presented clearly, accurately, and concisely in a way that answer the study questions or define the hypotheses (Moriarti, 1997, p. 88; Hart, 2005, p. 354 in Emilia 2008, p. 201).

Discussion contains the following according to Rudestam & Newton in Paltridge & Starfield (2007:145): (a) An overview of the significant findings of the study; (b) A consideration of the findings in the light of existing research studies; (c) Implications of the study for current theory (except in purely applied studies); (d) A careful examination of findings that fail to support or only partly support the hypotheses outlined in the study; (e) Limitations of the study that may affect the validity or the generalizability of the results; (f) Recommendations for further research; and (g) Implications of the study for professional practice or applied settings (optional).

### **2.3.3.5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Conclusion and recommendations serve several functions. They are to restate the research the findings and how they are integrated with the previous findings, to discuss the strength and weaknesses (limitation) of the research, and to recommend further research questions (Thomas, 2000; Cooley & Lewkowicz, 2003). The conclusion section is the closing chapter where students both summarize and ‘wrap up’ their work (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007).

The components as shown in the functions of conclusion are restatement of the research findings, the strength and weaknesses (limitation) of the research, and recommendation for further research, questions (Thomas, 2000; Cooley &

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Lewkowicz, 2003). Evans and Gruba in Paltridge & Starfield (2007) list the following features of conclusion: (a) The conclusions are what the discussion chapter has been arguing for; (b) The conclusions may be a separate chapter or they may be combined with the discussion chapter, labelled 'Discussion and Conclusions'; (c) The conclusions reached in this chapter should be drawn from the discussion chapter; (d) There should be no further discussion in the conclusions chapter; and (e) The conclusions should respond to the aims that were stated in the first chapter.

#### **2.3.4. Style and Tone**

Tone in writing is the attitude that the writer conveys to the reader. Style and tone refer to the use of formal and politeness of language and academic style guidelines (Potter, 1994). Tone is intended to create a specific response or emotion in the reader; it creates a personality that can either engage or repel users. The tone may be light-hearted, serious, or optimistic (Reid, 1998). The style is written in highly descriptive, succinct or dark and gritty (Potter, 1994).

#### **2.3.5. Conventions**

Conventions are rules in writing which include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and paragraphing are to enhance the readability of the paper (Hefferman & Lincoln, 1996; Steel, 2007). Conventions cover the use of evidence and facts based on references, definitions of terms and words, the right ways of citing and referencing, the length of the paper, the paper layout, avoidance of over-generalisations and the use of academic-style writing to show how sure the information is, such as using modal verbs such as may, might, could, etc., adverbs such as 'probably' and verbs such as 'seems to' or 'appears to' (Reid, 1998 and Potter, 1994).

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In this study, the assessment of the thesis is using Thesis Document Assessment (table 2.3) referring to Emilia (2008), Sorenson (2010), Holtom & Fisher (1999). Paltridge and Starfield (2007), Swales & Feak (1994): Kamler & Thomson, (2006); Mauch & Park (2003), Thomas (2000), and Glathorn & Joyner (2005). Cooley & Lewkowicz (2003), Hefferman & Lincoln (1996), Steel (2007), Reid (1998), Potter (1994), Gay et al (2006), Holtom & Fisher (1999, p. 12), Afolabi (1992), Pearce (2005), Thody (2006) as follows:

The topic is attractive, researchable, significant, manageable, and ethical  
The contents include: a) The thesis has a clear main idea supported with several points or arguments; b) The arguments or examples are clear and logical; c) Opposing viewpoints have been considered and responded clearly and effectively; and d) The question(s) in the thesis have been answered.

The organisation includes: a) There is a clear introduction, review of literature, research methodology and conclusion; b) The introduction introduces the topic and establishes the significance of the problem clearly; c) The review of literature is relevant, discusses the previous studies including arguments for and against and is well organized; d) The research methodology provides comprehensive, consistent, and accurate information about the procedure of research to replicate the research and method used to analyze the data; and e) The conclusion ties the ideas in the body of the thesis, summarizes the main points of the problem, and restates views on the most feasible solution(s).

The style and tone include: a) The thesis uses formal language; and b) The thesis follows academic style guidelines.

The conventions include: a) Terms and words have been defined: b) Citations and references have been included; c) The essay's word length guidelines have been followed; and d) The layout follows thesis guidelines.